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and her
Last Years in France

MY LIFE by ISADORA DUNCAN

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ISADORA DUNCAN'S

RUSSIAN DAYS

and her last years in France

by Irma Duncan
and Allan Ross Macdougall

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VICTOR GOLLANCZ LTD
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WE DEDICATE THIS BOOK

TO THE MEMORY OF

ISADORA DUNCAN

AND TO THE MEMORY OF

HER SPIRITUAL SISTERS

ELLEN TERRY

AND

ELEONORA DUSE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To our good friends, the artist Ch. Dallies ; the writers, Henriette Sauret, André Arnyvelde, Fernand Divoire, Georges Maurevert ; the musician, Vitya Seroff, all true and well-loved friends of Isadora and intimately associated with her in these latter years, we beg to acknowledge herewith our deepest thanks for their interest in our work and their kind permission, freely given, to quote from letters and documents in their possession.

I. D.
A. R. M.

FOREWORD

For many months before her tragic end—and indeed even before she had received a contract from the publishers for her memoirs—Isadora Duncan had in mind, and frequently spoke of, a book which she planned to call : " My Bolshevik Days." So many people, she said,—H. G. Wells, Emma Goldman, Claire Sheridan, and an uncountable number of others—had written their detailed or disgusted, enthusiastic or sceptical impressions of their more or less prolonged stay in " The Sixth Part of the World." She, whose life had been so unusual there, felt strongly urged to set down her impressions and tell the truth as she saw it. These impressions, she knew, could never have the same social significance as the works from the pens of such trained writers and scientific spirits as H. G. Wells and Bertrand Russell. But from the human side she had experienced so many strange and unusual things, not only in her life in Moscow at the school, but also in her travels about the country dancing for the workers and peasants, that with her gift for vivid verbal

expression such a book as " My Bolshevik Days " would have been a worthy pendant to her now famous autobiography.

The undersigned, who have made this attempt to write an account of Isadora's Russian days and set down, as far as is humanly possible, an account of her life until the thread of it was snapped on that tragic evening of September 14, 1927, had worked and lived with the dancer long and intimately. The first had gone to her as a pupil in 1905. Then, after having danced with her all over Europe and America, she had accompanied her on the adventurous voyage to Soviet Russia. She still remains there as Director of the Isadora Duncan School of the Dance in Moscow. The second was for a period, in 1916–17, secretary to the dancer, and remained closely associated with her until the end. During the last, lean days in Paris and Nice he was constantly with her.

Both writers, working together on the Russian and the French days of Isadora Duncan, have attempted to follow by the speeches, the manuscript notes, and the letters which she left them, the plans made by Isadora for the second volume of her life. They have not attempted, by any means, to write a complete biography or make a psychological study of the dancer after the manner of the latter-day Boswells ; they have

merely set down the data and traced the outline of the last six years of her life, which were as vivid and fertile as the other years had been. These data and this outline may be of some interest to those readers who were disappointed by the brusque ending of the dancer's own book. The writers also hope that their incomplete work may be of some documentary use to the future historians of America's greatest woman genius.

In the recently published *Journal* of Jules Renard, there is the following phrase apropos of Paul Verlaine :

" *On confond toujours l'homme et l'artiste sous pretexte que le hasard les a réunis dans le même corps.*"

And so, invariably, unthinking people were confused about Isadora Duncan : so she seemed to them contradictory and inconsistent. They did not, or could not, understand that, in her body, hazard had united two different people ; the woman and the artist.

Her destiny ran on a double loom. On one frame was woven the fabric of her art life, richly-coloured, nobly and consistently fashioned, with divine simplicity and beauty in the pattern ; on the other frame ran her private life, a stuff as rich in colour as the first, but with snarls in the warp and woof and a design that was seldom symmetrical or complete—or rather, a succession of divers designs, original and striking, but

often seemingly marred by the hand of the perverse weaver.

To the reader, therefore, who may find in the pages that follow apparent contradictions and inconsistencies, we can only say, paraphrasing the words of Walt Whitman :

" Does she contradict herself? Very well, she contradicts herself."

Irma Duncan.
Allan Ross Macdougall.

Moscow, U.S.S.R.
June, 1928.

RUSSIA

1921–1922

CHAPTER I

When Isadora Duncan stepped on board the S.S. *Baltanic* on the 12th of July, 1921, to set sail with her pupil for Soviet Russia, many of her friends and admirers thought she had taken leave of her senses. But to those who really knew her there was nothing very strange about the dancer's idea. They knew it was not the result of any erratic brain-wave ; they knew that she had always loved Russia and the Russian people, who had understood her art as perhaps few other peoples had done. Above all they knew that she was at heart, like all true artists, a non-conformist, a revolutionary.

Isadora Duncan loved Russia, through which she had already made three fruitful *tournées* : in 1905, 1908, and 1913. The effect she had on her audiences, on the intelligenzia, and on members of the Imperial Ballet has been told at length by Svetlov and Bakst in their history of the *Ballet Russe*. The profound impression made on the dancer's mind by the sight of the sorrowful funeral procession of the victims of the Bloody Sunday, when the unarmed masses, bearing ikons and

banners, led by Father Gapon, marched peacefully towards the Czar's Palace in St. Petersburg, may be realised by reading her book, *My Life*. Moreover, anyone who ever saw her dance the Tchaikowsky *Marche Slave* will not need to be told how Isadora Duncan felt about the Czarist oppression of the Russian masses.

When she heard the first news of the Russian Revolution during her American *tournée* in 1917, she danced this same *Marche Slave* to an astonished audience, as she had never danced it before. It was then, doubtless, that the idea of returning to a Russia freed from despotism, to dance for the people, was born in her brain. Years later, after she had returned to Russia and had lived, worked, and suffered there, during the period between 1921 and 1924, she confessed to a friend that the three years spent in Soviet Russia were really the happiest three of her life.

In the summer of 1920, in Paris, the dancer gave a series of performances at the Theâtre des Champs Elysées. At one of these she presented a programme of her Chopin dances, which she had composed into a sort of epic triptych : Poland Tragic ; Poland Heroic ; Poland Langorous and Gay. The packed theatre, that day, was unusually exuberant and demonstrative ; at the end of the

matinée they threw many bunches of roses and lilies, and corsage bouquets of violets and orchids, before the feet of the bowing artist, until the front of the stage seemed carpeted with flowers. Then, in answer to repeated calls from the audience, she danced the *Marseillaise*. At the end of this heroic dance, the cries and cheers of the audience were louder than before, and more insistent. So, with the scarlet shawl of the *Marseillaise* draped about her, she came forward to speak. One of her admirers, the artist Ch. Dallies, sitting in a darkened loge, took down the speech as the words came haltingly from the dancer's lips. She spoke in French and said :

" I have danced the *Marseillaise* to-day because I love France. I have journeyed much in the countries of the civilised world, and I can say from the bottom of my heart : France is the only country that understands Liberty, Life, Art, and Beauty ; France is the only one. I have great hopes for Russia. At this moment she is passing through the growing-pains of childhood, but I believe that she is the future for Artists and the Spirit. . . .

" You know why you are here to-day. It is not for me, nor yet for yourselves, but for the little children who will dance in the future. . . .

" I did not invent my dance. It existed before

me, but it lay dormant. I merely discovered and awakened it. . . .

" When I speak of my school, people do not understand that I do not want paying pupils ; I do not sell my soul for silver. I do not want the rich children. They have money and no need for Art. The children I long for are the orphans of the war, who have lost everything, who no longer have their fathers and mothers. As for me, I have little need of money. Look at my costumes. They are not complicated ; they did not cost very much. Look at my *décors* ; these simple blue curtains I have had since I first started dancing. As for jewels, I have no need for them. A flower is more beautiful in the hands of a woman than all the pearls and diamonds in the world. Don't you think so ?

" They do not understand why I wish to keep the children in a school ; why I do not want them to come to me each day from their homes and return to them each evening. It is because when they return to these homes they will not be properly nourished, either mentally or physically. I want my pupils to know Shakespeare, and Dante, and Æschylus, and Molière. I want them to read and know the master-minds of the world. . . .

" To dance is to live. And that is what I want —a school of Life ; for the riches of man are his

Soul and his Imagination. Give me, ask your President to give me, one hundred war-orphans, and in five years I will give you—this I promise —beauty and riches beyond imagining.

" There is perhaps a life after this one here. I do not know what we shall have. But this I do know : our riches here on earth are our wills and our imaginations. . . .

" When I was twenty, I loved the German philosophers. I read Kant, Schopenhauer, Haeckel, and others. I was an intellectual ! When I was twenty-one, I offered my school to Germany. The Kaiserin responded that it was immoral ! The Kaiser said it was revolutionary ! Then I proposed my school to America, but they said there that it stood for the vine . . . and Dionysos. Dionysos is Life, is the Earth, and America is the land where they drink lemonade. And how can one dance on lemonade ? I then proposed my school to Greece, but the Greeks were too busy fighting the Turks. To-day I propose my school to France, but France, in the person of the amiable Minister of Fine Arts, gives me a smile. I cannot nourish the children in my school on a smile. They must live on fruits and milk and the honey of Hymettus. . . .

" As for me, I wait. Help me get my school. If not, I will go to Russia with the Bolshevists.

I know nothing about their politics. I am not a politician. But I will say to the leaders : ' Give me your children, and I will teach them to dance like gods, or . . . assassinate me.' They will give me my school or they will assassinate me. For if I do not have my school I would far rather be killed. It would be much better. . . ."

CHAPTER II

In April of the year 1921, after an absence of over twelve years from the theatres there, Isadora Duncan went to London to give a series of performances with the pianist, Walter Rummel. The London public welcomed the great dancer rapturously. All her old friends, like the valiant Ellen Terry, grandmother of little Deirdre, the artist Augustus John, Lady Scott, and many poets, musicians, painters, crowded her salons at Claridge's. In the various newspapers appeared long eulogistic articles. Among them, one by the eminent writer on music, Ernest Newman, pleased the dancer, particularly the part wherein he writes :

" What she gives us is a sort of sculpture in transition.

" Imagine a dozen statues expressive, say of the cardinal phases of despair—the poses and gestures and facial expressions of the moment in which each of these phases reaches its maximum of intensity. Then imagine some hundreds of statues that represent, in faultless beauty, every one of the moments of slow transition between

these cardinal phases, and you get the art of Isadora Duncan. The soul becomes drunk with this endless succession of beautiful lines and groupings.

"The muscular control they imply is itself wonderful enough; but more wonderful still must be the brain that can conceive and realise all these faultless harmonies of form. She seems to transfer her magic even to the fabrics she works with; no one who has ever seen it can forget the beauty of the slow sinking of her cloak to earth in one of her dances; the ripples in it move the spirit like a series of soft, mysterious modulations in music.

"Her secret, so far as we can penetrate to it, is apparently in the marvellous co-operation of every cell of her brain and every movement of her face and limbs. So perfectly does the machine work that, paradoxically, we can sometimes see it working when it is quite still.

"The most wonderful illustration we had of this was at a certain moment in her miming of the 'Ride of the Valkyries' when, in dead immobility, she gave us an incredible suggestion of the very ecstasy of movement: something in the rapt face, I imagine, carried on the previous joy of the wild flight through the air. The sudden cessation of physical motion had the overwhelming effect that Beethoven and Wagner now

and then make, not with their music, but by a pause in it."

At this period there was in London a Trade Commission from Soviet Russia, which was headed by Leonid Krassine, one of the most cultured and charming of all the Bolshevist leaders. Having heard of the internationally famous dancer's interest in the new Russian State, he went to one of her performances at the Prince of Wales's Theatre. It happened to be the one where, among other things of Tchaikowsky, she danced the *Marche Slave*, accompanied by the London Symphony Orchestra. Krassine—like all Russian revolutionaries before or since who have seen this tremendously compact dance-drama of Slavic repression and freedom—was moved to tears by the artist's interpretation.

Immediately after the performance he rushed behind the stage to pay his homage to the dancer. And there in that theatrical dressing-room they discussed briefly and somewhat banteringly the idea of the dancer's going to Russia to found a great school of the dance. Krassine promised to do all in his power to facilitate the scheme. Having, in the meantime, telegraphed to his colleagues in Moscow, he went a few days later to Isadora's hotel and discussed the prospect at

length, in all its bearings. He offered her a contract to sign, but she refused to have any such "bourgeois" arrangement between "comrades"! Would Isadora then write out a statement of what she desired, he suggested. This Isadora did, in the form of a letter to the People's Commissar of Education, Anatole Vasilief Lunatcharsky:

"I shall never hear of money in exchange for my work. I want a studio-workshop, a house for myself and pupils, simple food, simple tunics, and the opportunity to give our best work. I am sick of bourgeois, commercial art. It is sad that I have never been able to give my work to the people for whom it was created. Instead I have been forced to sell my art for five dollars a seat. I am sick of the modern theatre, which resembles a house of prostitution more than a temple of art, where artists who should occupy the place of high-priests are reduced to the manœuvres of shop-keepers selling their tears and their very souls for so much a night. I want to dance for the masses, for the working people who need my art and have never had the money to come and see me. And I want to dance for them for nothing, knowing that they have not been brought to me by clever publicity, but because they really want to have what I can give them. If you accept me on these terms, I will come and work

for the future of the Russian Republic and its children.

" Isadora Duncan."

On receipt of this letter, Lunatcharsky telegraphed to the dancer, who was then in Paris :

" Come to Moscow. We will give you School and thousand children. You may carry out your idea on a big scale."

To this Isadora replied :

" Accept your invitation. Will be ready to sail from London July first."

Shortly after this exchange of telegrams, Isadora gave a farewell party at her Paris studio. All her friends came to this party, among them several Russian immigrants : Mlle. Tchaikowsky, the daughter of a former Minister of Agriculture under the Czarist Régime, Maklakov, a former Russian Ambassador to France, and others. When they heard that the dancer had really made up her mind to go to Soviet Russia, they were violently shocked. The idea which they had taken as an erratic whim was really an ardent desire. Mlle. Tchaikowsky went down on her knees before the couch where Isadora was, as usual, reclining, and implored her not to go. She told of a letter she had had from her father, who had in turn received it from some one in Russia, telling of unspeakable horrors.

Dramatically she waved the letter before Isadora, asking her, with tearful voice, to read it.

" Look what they are doing. Food is so scarce that they (the Bolshevists) are slaughtering four-year-old children and hanging them up by their limbs in butcher shops."

Isadora's naturally sceptical mind refused to believe such extravagantly hysterical statements, and when some of the other Russians present confirmed this news, and at the same time implored her by all the holy saints to abandon the voyage, she merely replied, looking pale and grim : " Well, if this is all true, then I *must* go ! "

Later, when all the guests were gone, and Isadora and Irma were left alone, unable to forget the conversation about Bolshevist horrors, Isadora jokingly said : " Don't worry, Irma. They'll eat me first anyway. There's a lot of me. Meanwhile you'll manage to escape ! "

At the beginning of June Isadora gave a farewell party in her studio. Two French novelists came, Madame Rachilde and Monsieur Maurice Verne ; the well-known actor-manager, Jacques Copeau ; Severine, the dean of French women journalists, a valiant fighter for truth and justice, beloved by friend and foe alike ; Ch. Dallies, the artist and intimate friend of Isadora ; and three pupils, Irma, Lisa, Margot.

A few days later an article from the pen of Severine appeared in one of the Paris papers, telling of the soirée spent in the temple on the Rue de la Pompe. She described the beauty of the studio and the charming welcome of the dancer. Then she set down the conversation she had with Isadora apropos of her forthcoming trip to Russia. Isadora, speaking, said : " Come to us, said the Barbarians. We have suffered terribly and we shall still suffer, but under the claw of the cold and the tooth of hunger we have hoped, we hope, that there will appear to us the consoling visage of Art. When Chaliapin sings we forget our tribulations. When you dance, there will be resurrection in all hearts, and light in all eyes. . . . Come ! The Republic of the poor will do for you that which the Republics of the rich could never do.

" And Krassine said : ' What contract do you want ? '

" ' A contract ? ' I laughed. ' I have no need of that. I want pupils, a school, a great hall to create my work.

" ' Then,' I added, for one must be particular, ' we shall be fed ? '

" ' Yes,' said Krassine, marvelling at this *insouciance* which he had not seen so often among the civilised. And perhaps a little emotion was mixed with his surprise."

" This evening Isadora dances for us ; a dozen friends. It is her *adieu*. She is off to Brussels, then on to London. And after . . .

" Under the fingers of a great artist, M. de Renneville, one of the two pianos on the stage breathes a Prelude of Chopin. And Isadora surges out of the shadow. . . .

" Here she is, then, she who thought to resuscitate in our midst the play of noble attitudes, the rhythm of grace in the movements of life ! Under the vaporous envelope of her veils she embodies, successively, inquietude, melancholy, doubt, resignation, hope. Her face is like the surface of a lake where the ripples pass, like a mirror reflecting the rapid race of the clouds.

" It is so beautiful that we do not applaud. Only our stifled breaths reveal in the silence all the anguish that our dumb enthusiasm bears.

" Then she calls her pupils. There are only three, on this evening before the departure, but it seems as though the Graces of Falconnet have left the pedestal where they have stood for more than a century. And these graces here have more than line ; they have the charm of life. They come and go, dancing a rondo, while over them and about them floats the scarf with which Proudhon encircled the delicate face of Psyche.

" It is incomparably charming, youthful, and gay.

" Isadora leans over to me : ' And if they were five hundred, if they were a thousand, don't you think that they would be lovelier still ; don't you think that they would give the people something to rest them from their blackest cares ? For there will not only be we ; my pupils will teach all the little ones. They will know how to dance as they know how to read : there will be joy for all ! '

" ' And if you are hungry ? ' asks a sceptic.

" Isadora shrugs her magnificent shoulders, and with an accent made grave by conviction : ' We will dance so as not to think of it ! '

" O cricket ! Delicious cricket that puts to shame the ants ! "

Leaving Paris, Isadora went on to Brussels and gave a few performances, and from there she went to London. She was accompanied by three of her pupils, Irma, Theresa, Lisa. (The two latter refused at the last moment to embark with her on the adventure.) Together with the London Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Désiré Defauw, they gave a series of performances at the Queen's Hall.

One day in June, Isadora and Irma were asked by Krassine to come to lunch at the Embassy, and they found the Trade Commissioner and his wife such delightful hosts that all their fears about the dreadful habits of Bolshevists were set

at rest. Krassine told Isadora that the powers in Moscow had decided to place at her disposal not only the thousand young children she desired but also the beautiful Imperial palace at Livadia in the Crimea !

Everything seemed perfect. There would be the beautiful climate, and the fruitful Riviera countryside, where the thousand talented children could be taught in the open air. They would move in grace, as the cypress trees move, and dance as rhythmically as the waves of the tideless blue sea washing the walls of the castle gardens. There would be the many-chambered mansion where they would be comfortably installed ; over all would be the benevolent support of a far-seeing government. What more could she desire ?

Perhaps, after all, her great idea of seeing thousands of children dance the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven was going to be realised.

Perhaps, after all, a great wave of brotherhood, aided by the dance, would sweep out of Russia and wash Europe clean of all its pettinesses and all its internecine hatreds. . . .

Perhaps . . .

CHAPTER III

The S.S. *Baltanic*, which had sailed from London on the fateful day of the 13th of July, arrived at Reval on the 19th after an uneventful voyage. Standing on the Pier were two women, Mrs. Litvinov, the wife of the Assistant Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and her companion. They had been delegated by the Soviet Government to meet the arriving guests. Mrs. Litvinov, after welcoming them, saw to it that the heavy baggage was sealed up and dispatched to the Consul's office. There arrangements had been made for the three travellers to sleep in the Consul's office, but after wandering about the town with Miss Mitchel and General H——, two friends from the boat, they returned with them to spend the night on board the *Baltanic*.

The following morning they watched the ship sail slowly out of Reval Harbour and waved good-bye to their friends. As the boat sailed farther and farther away, they felt uncomfortably lonely and forlorn, as though they had been dropped by the captain of the disappearing ship on a barren island peopled by incredible

barbarians. . . . When the boat was finally lost in the grey distances, Isadora turned to Irma with a brave smile and, hugging her close, said : " Well, we are in for it now ! "

At midnight, escorted by Mrs. Litvinov, Isadora, Irma, and Jeanne, the French maid, boarded the train for Moscow. The hardy travellers found that they had to share their second-class compartment with a young man, a complete stranger ! Adieu drawing-room cars, private compartments, sumptuous dining cars. Adieu all the little luxuries of ordinary first-class railroad travel, in countries undisturbed by internal strife or social upheavals. Adieu, Blue Trains, Flying Scotsmen, 20th Century Limiteds that speed through the night along greased tracks at 100 kilometres an hour !

The young stranger in the compartment, they discovered later, as the candle-lit train crawled along the uncared-for tracks, was a Bolshevist courier. A very timid young man. Not at all like the pictures of the blood-thirsty Bolshevik : " *L'homme au couteau entre les dents*," as the French election posters had it. However, the young man, in the presence of the dynamic artiste, soon warmed up, and before Moscow was reached he was not only a good travelling companion but also a great help.

When the train arrived at the Russian border,

and they saw the soldiers of the Red Army standing about under the crimson banner of the new Republic, they were thrilled beyond telling. Isadora's enthusiasm took the form of wanting to join the Communist party on the spot. She asked the young courier to initiate her without further delay. Their conversation for many hours afterwards was all about communist doctrine and the leaders of the movement.

The first station over the Russian frontier, on leaving Esthonia, was Narva. The Soviet customsmen who examined the hand-baggage there informed the travellers that the train was likely to stay there for the rest of the day. Isadora, unable to remain cooped up in the immobile train, went off to explore the village. She went alone, for the courier was unable to leave his valises, and Irma was not yet awake. In the village market the enterprising explorer bought flowers and raspberries, which she carried back to the train for breakfast. Later she again went for a walk in the village with Irma, and they paid a visit to the school. On the way back to the station they were followed, like two Pied Pipers, by a motley juvenile throng. When they arrived at the train, Isadora had Jeanne bring out the portable gramophone and some records. And there on the station platform she gave the astonished and wide-eyed children a concert and a

dancing lesson. Then she improvised a little dance for them and ended the party by giving them all the white bread and cake from the lunch basket which General H—— had presented to them at Reval. All the candy and sweet-stuffs that she could find in her baggage she also gave them, with no thought for the lean days to come.

In the evening, the train being at a standstill, they decided to have a picnic dinner in the village with a tin of Reval herrings and some caviar, all that remained of the delicacies in the General's basket. Late at night the train decided to crawl on to Petrograd, where, after much puffing and blowing and uncountable momentary stops, it finally arrived at ten next morning.

From the station the travellers were driven to the Petrograd Soviet Headquarters at the Hôtel D'Angleterre, where the authorities had arranged a room for them. Later they went out walking in the city. Isadora had a special affection for Petrograd. But how changed it all was ! Seeing the desolation and the unwashed, empty shop windows ; watching the people going by hugging their little parcels of food obtained after God knows how many hours of waiting in line, she could not help recalling the movement and the opulent splendour of other days. She remembered, with not a little sadness, all the happy and luxurious fêtes given in her honour

in 1905 and 1908. She walked along the quay of Neva and saw the leprous and dilapidated palaces —" this one was a present from the Grand Duke Michael to the Ballerina Kschinskaya, who was so charming to me in 1905 ; that palace over there, with the gaping shell-holes, once belonged to the Dowager Duchess who came to all my performances. . . ." She was ineffably sad. When, however, she finally reached the Winter Palace and learned that it was now a hospital for children, her faith in the new régime was revived.

On returning to the Hôtel D'Angleterre they found four young strangers in Greek robes waiting to pay homage to the dancer, whose arrival in town they had learned of in some mysterious way. From subsequent conversation it was discovered that the leaders of this little Neo-Hellenic band were two girls who had helped Irma Duncan in translating the lessons which she gave to the Russian children in April, 1914, when she went to St. Petersburg and Moscow to choose children for Isadora's new school in Bellevue. From a simple translation of the dancing instructions they had gone on to found a school of dancing of their own ! When they had left the room, Isadora, in a hilarious mood, cried to Irma : " Isn't it extraordinary ? If I receive people and am nice to them, or if they come in contact with you or some other one of my pupils, they go off

and open schools of Duncan dancing. Or else they unlatch their shoon and dance themselves. It has happened so often that it has become a joke. If all my supposed pupils were to be placed end to end they would stretch from here across Siberia to Vladivostok and back again ! "

The train for Moscow left Petrograd at midnight, and the midnight sun shone brightly. The train wheezed and puffed, stopping often and long at small stations and junctions. Crowds of peasants and whole families with their samovars and their bedding crowded each station. Some of them, it was said, had waited a week to get a train to take them to their final destination. Travel, even for short distances, was none too easy. The journey between Petrograd and Moscow, that normally takes fourteen hours, took exactly twenty-eight. The train crept into the Moscow station at four o'clock on the morning of July twenty-fourth—a Sunday.

CHAPTER IV

The Nikolaiski Station was dark and empty. The excitement the travellers had felt on entering the outskirts of the city turned to a very evident disappointment when they saw that no one had come to meet them. No friendly welcoming voices ; no wreaths or festive garlands. Not even an impersonal official voice asking if " Duncan " were there. The few other passengers had descended from the train and hurried out of the deserted station, apparently sure of their destinations.

Isadora expressed her vibrant surprise to the sympathetic young courier. After all, she *had* come to Russia as the *guest* of the Soviet Government. Her comings and goings, in even the most obscure places in Europe and America, always caused a stir among the population. And now here she was, the world-famous invited guest of a great government, and they had not even sent a porter to meet her or tell her where to go !

" Wait in the carriage," said the young man, who was as astonished as Isadora, " and I will

go outside and see if there is a car or someone waiting. There may be someone in the outside waiting-room or else asleep in a car in the square."

After a brief delay he came back with the news that there was only one car waiting outside—an official one from the Foreign Office that was there to take him and his dispatch case to their final destination. If she wished, he said, he could take Madame Duncan with him to the Foreign Office, and the other two ladies also. At the Office he would surely be able to find out what arrangements had been made about living accommodation for them.

Silently, much mystified by this strange lack of elementary consideration, the weary travellers got into the little red car, and were driven swiftly over the cobblestones of the neglected and unlighted streets. Past high-walled squares, past great and small churches, whose domes and cupolas were fantastically silhouetted in the moonlight, past gloomy buildings they drove, and finally, after a word from the courier to the driver, they stopped before the Lux Hotel. The courier had an idea that rooms might have been reserved there. He went in to inquire and discovered that no rooms had been reserved for Duncan, and in any case none could be had by strangers. The Lux Hotel was reserved exclusively for visiting orthodox communists.

The party was then driven towards the Theatre Square where, in the once luxurious Hotel Metropole, Soviet House Number Two was installed, and the Commissar for Foreign Affairs Tchicherin and his staff had their offices. While the women remained in the car, the courier delivered his various dispatch cases. The motor had stopped, and there was no sign of life in the square. Ahead, in the distance, rose the dark walls of the Kremlin. The scene looked like an illustration for a Russian folk-tale; it was all uncannily still and unreal.

Isadora and Irma sat close together. They were exhausted by the excitement of the three days and the tiring journey in the slow train. And they were apprehensive and, oh, so hungry! Since landing from the *Baltanic* they had not had one regular meal. Food was scarce, they soon found out, and nowhere to be seen. And when it was seen, it could not be purchased, for everybody was on rations dealt out by the government. Long before the first day of the train journey all the contents of General H——'s lunch basket had been consumed. The heavy black bread offered on the train could not be eaten. The very first slice upset stomachs which were unused to it.

Sitting there in the open car, cold, and feeling deserted by God and man, their thoughts turned, not unnaturally, to hot coffee and buns. In Paris,

they thought, there would be some "*rendezvous des cochers*" just around the corner ; in London there would be the open-air coffee stalls ; in New York there would be a wealth of possible choices from the bath-room Child's to the nickel Automat. Fragrant coffee with real cream, and buns hot from the bakers. Ah . . .

Their gastronomic meditations were interrupted by the sudden lighting up of a window on the second floor and the appearance of a man's figure leaning out. He looked down at the occupants of the car, trying to distinguish them in the dark. Here, they thought, as they clasped hands, is our first real Bolshevik. The figure withdrew from the window, and a few minutes afterwards a tall man in dark clothes came down the steps towards the car. He leaned forward and, kissing Isadora's hand, said : "Don't you remember me ?"

Isadora looked closely and then recalled the speaker's name—Florinsky. She had met him in America in 1918, in company with the Baron Ungern-Sternberg. He was then known as *Count* Florinsky. Isadora and Irma shrieked with laughter. It was too droll ! Their first real Bolshevik in the heart of Moscow—Count Florinsky ! Immaculately dressed in dinner clothes and patent leather shoes, he stood there wondering why they laughed so.

A few minutes later they were installed in Florinsky's private office.

" Are you very tired ? "

" Not so much tired as very hungry," said Isadora. " We haven't had a real meal for three days and we never expect to have another. I really don't believe one can dine in Russia any more ! "

" Why," said the Bolshevik count, " I've just come from a wonderful dinner at the Turkish Embassy. We had chicken broth, and fried chicken, and white bread and butter, and wines, and excellent coffee ! "

But the hungry travellers refused to believe that such things existed until they had partaken of them themselves. So Florinsky invited them to the Savoy Hotel near by, where he had a room. When they were as comfortably settled as conditions allowed, the host lighted a Primus stove. Then with the skill of one who has long known how to make the best of things under varying circumstances, he prepared an omelette that would have done honour to the Doyenne of the Mont. St. Michel Omelette Makers. This he served to the famished travellers with rolls and butter and some unsweetened tea.

He then set about trying to get them accommodation in the hotel. There was but one room available. When they went to it they found that

there was only one bed. It was sheetless and without pillows. On this Isadora lay down. Irma curled up on the short sofa ; Jeanne, wondering why she was so far away from home, sat upright on the only chair. They all fell asleep. But soon they were awakened by a pestering army of flies that started buzzing about as the light of dawn came into the room. The air seemed to be black with them. About the face they were more persistent and irritating than gnats. They were determined that the alien occupants of the room should not sleep further in peace. The flies were also aided in their task by other more infinitesimal members of the insect world.

When they both found that it was impossible to continue sleeping, Isadora and Irma got up. After they had washed, they went out to seek their friend Florinsky and see what could be done about getting in touch with those who ought to have made arrangements for their arrival. It was Sunday, and naturally all the Government offices were closed. Florinsky tried to phone to the homes of various authorities, chiefly to the Commissar for Education and Fine Arts, Anatole Lunatcharsky, who was to have been notified of the dancer's arrival by the Soviet Consul at Reval. But no official of any importance was at home. They were all enjoying the July Sunday in the country.

Not knowing what else to do, Florinsky proposed a walk around the Kremlin and along the broad outer boulevard that circles Moscow. When they arrived back at the Savoy many hours later they seemed to have been walking for an eternity. Ravenously hungry, they went into the dining-room, hoping for a good lunch. In the centre of the room there was one large table, and several small ones at the side. At the centre table sat a dozen or so grimy, unshaven men. They wore their hats and coats and audibly supped out of tin bowls a dark, greasy-looking soup, eating the while great hunks of black bread. They were comrades ! Isadora prepared to sit down at their table, although there were other smaller tables where three people might have sat with ease and some privacy. She greeted them cheerfully : " How do you do, *tovarishi*," she said, giving them her most sweet and ingenuous smile.

But the *tovarishi* went on eating, after having glanced up sidewise for a moment—the time to take in this " comrade " in a Callot Sœurs creation—and then went back to the serious business of lapping up the soup. So the newcomers sat down in silence, and the same sort of tin bowls and the mysterious dark soup and three large hunks of black bread were pushed before them. Isadora, with motions that suggested that she was about to sip clear turtle soup

at a Lord Mayor's Banquet, tried to taste the Witches' Brew. Irma managed to put her soup-spoon in the bowl but could not raise it to her lips. Jeanne the maid sat silent, looking like an Early Christian Martyr. But in her case it was not that the food was in any way distasteful to her. She confided to Irma afterwards : " *Oh, je ne peux pas manger avec Madame à la même table !* "

Irma tried to explain to her that as they were now in Russia, they were all comrades. There was no more rank or station. It had been abolished by the Communists. Had she not seen Isadora treat the working men at the table as comrades ? But all this meant nothing to the logical French peasant mind of Jeanne : " *Non ! Non ! Qu'on me laisse tranquille. Je ne veux pas être la camarade de Madame !* "

They all left the dining-room as hungry as they had entered it and sadly returned to their temporary room. Soon there was a knock on the door, followed by a soft " *Moshno*," and in came the young courier from the train. He had brought a large thermos bottle of cocoa and some white bread from his rations. His name was blessed. They called him a saviour. They began to eat the rare manna with avidity, when suddenly Jeanne gave vent to a piercing shriek. Irma turned and saw to her horror a gargantuan rat

slowly crossing the room. She also shrieked and jumped up from her chair. Isadora got up from the bed, and together they rushed from the room. The young man tried to chase the rat, but it wouldn't be chased until it had picked up a crumb or two. Then it slowly returned to its hiding-place under the bath, where it had a litter of squealing ratlets.

In the few pages of manuscript left by Isadora Duncan in Moscow, the rough draft for the beginning of her proposed book about her Russian experiences, she says :

" I went to Russia accompanied only by my pupil Irma and my faithful maid Jeanne, who though livid with fear, would not desert ' Madame.' We had been told such terrible things that as the train passed the red flag at the frontier, we would not have been surprised if the pictured Bolshevik with red flannel shirt, black beard, and a knife between his teeth, had appeared to violate us all three, and then cut our throats as an evening's amusement. We all confessed to some shiver of excitement and were perhaps a bit disappointed when there appeared only a very timid young man with grey eyes and spectacles, who said he was a communist student and spoke six languages and asked if he might serve us. He was very shy and not at all our preconceived idea of a Bolshevik. Only I noticed that when he

spoke of Lenin, his grey eyes blazed behind his glasses, and his whole slight figure trembled with enthusiastic devotion. He told in shivers, of the fanatic sacrifices of the communists and the repulses of the White Armies, which savoured of miracle and holy war.

" Our first night at Moscow we left Jeanne in the one room available at the hotel, in the one bed, weeping hysterically because she had seen ' *Des grands rats*,' and we spent the night with a little Bolshevist, wandering about the mystically beautiful city of the many churches and golden domes. He talked, more and more inspired, of the future of communism, until by dawn we were also ready to die for Lenin and the cause. Then some clouds blew up, and it began to rain on us. Our guide seemed supremely indifferent to the wet, and I also noticed now that we hadn't eaten anything for fourteen hours. I found, after meeting others, that a real communist is indifferent to heat or cold or hunger or any material sufferings. As the early Christian martyrs, they live so entirely in ideas that they simply don't notice these things. But Irma and I were worn out ; and so we tramped back to the train. . . ."

The train, which still contained all the heavy baggage, was standing at a siding in the station. By tipping a porter, Isadora, the young man, and Irma managed to have two compartments

opened, and there they passed the night, peacefully and almost comfortably. When Isadora awoke next morning, it was eleven o'clock. After waiting about in the station with the vain hope that someone might come along to conduct them to their hotel—the young man having already left earlier in the morning—they decided to make an attempt to find their way to the other end of the town. All its mystic charm was gone in the broad daylight. It seemed incredibly shabby and neglected, and the smells that assailed their nostrils were, to say the least, Oriental. After more than an hour's walk through streets and avenues that looked very different from the night before, Isadora and Irma, with the aid of an excellent sense of direction, finally found their way back to the ratty hotel, whose name, to one who had known the London Savoy, seemed a mockery.

Florinsky, who was waiting for them, said that he had no news. They sat down and wondered how long they were to be left there in a state of indecision about their immediate future. It was only in the afternoon, when Lunatcharsky returned from the country and found on his desk the notification of the arrival of the dancer, that he sent his secretary to conduct her to the apartment that they had arranged.

Tant mieux ! she said. At last something decisive

was being done. Jeanne was in hysterics, Irma was weary, and she herself was tired and disappointed. All three, after four days of uncertain food, uncomfortable repose, and the exaggerated fatigues and emotions of a journey into a new land and life, were heartily glad to be taken to a place where at least they could really rest without fear of rats, and eat without nausea.

CHAPTER V

The apartment which the Commissar of Education had hurriedly arranged for Isadora Duncan belonged, she was told by the secretary who came to take her there, to Geltzer. And who was Geltzer, she asked. Lunatcharsky's secretary looked at her as though she had asked : who is Stanislawsky, or who is Chaliapin. To be so great a dancer and not know one's contemporaries ! Geltzer, the young man obligingly explained, was the most famous dancer in Russia and the prima ballerina of the Moscow Opera. She belonged to the same school and the same epoch as Anna Pavlova.

The secretary went on to say that when Comrade Lunatcharsky found the note on his desk telling of the arrival of Duncan he was somewhat at a loss what to do. He had not quite expected that she would really give up her easy life in the capitals of Western Europe and come to work and live in unsettled Russia. He had made no arrangements about housing her. At that time all the hotels were overflowing with communist officials and government officers, and

there was no place worthy of so distinguished a guest as Duncan. (While all the rest of the world calls her by her first name, the Russians have always, since her first visit in 1905, called her "Duncan.")

While wondering where she might be comfortably installed Lunatcharsky had remembered the absence of Geltzer from Moscow. She was on a tour in the south of Russia. The Commissar did what was quite common in the early days of communism : commandeered the vacant apartment and sent his secretary to see that Duncan was properly installed. He may have had a thousand important things to do, but one would have imagined that, if only to repair the breach of courtesy of the previous day, he would have visited the distinguished guest and conducted her in person to her first Moscow residence. But it was only a few days afterwards that Isadora met for the first time the man with whom she had exchanged the letters and telegrams about her coming to Moscow.

For a while, before she finally saw that events turned in another direction, Isadora thought that there was surely a symbolic meaning attached to her taking the place vacated by Geltzer. She considered that the ballet as an art form had about as much connection with a proletarian

state as diamond backed terrapin served in golden platters. The ballet had always been supported and encouraged by the Imperial family and the nobility. It was an aristocratic diversion *par excellence.*

" The School of the Ballet of to-day," Isadora had said, " vainly striving against the natural laws of gravitation or the natural will of the individual, and working in discord in its form and movement with the form and movement of Nature, produces a sterile movement which gives no birth to future movements, but dies as it is made."

And in coming to Russia her great thought was to found a free school of the dance, as she conceived it, which would, by the very force of its beauty and freedom, end by dethroning the sterile conservative ballet from its entrenched position, even as the workers had dethroned the conservative Imperial rulers. But she had not counted on the strong position held by the Moscow Ballet, with its school and government subsidy. The ballet in Moscow still goes on as it has always done. Political and social revolutions have crashed over it and left no mark ; artistic and theatrical revolutions, as exemplified in the work of such iconoclasts as Tairoff, Granowsky, and Meyerholdt, have taken place in other Moscow theatres, but still the ballet goes on like

the Bourbons, " forgetting nothing and learning nothing."

Geltzer's apartment was a small place gorged with bric-à-brac and expensive bibelots—one does not live fifty years as a great ballerina without collecting, even in spite of one's self, all those precious souvenirs that are so hard to put away out of sight and yet so easy to break. Isadora had never had such a multitude of small things about her. She was always used to having an enormous high room hung with blue draperies and furnished with some low divans and tables. To live in such an interior decorator's nightmare as the ballerina's apartment, constantly haunted by the fear that a too free gesture might send a Sèvres vase or a Dresden shepherdess shattering to the floor, made her nervous. She did finally end by breaking an over-delicate porcelain lamp.

The first visitor to the apartment, when Isadora was finally installed, was Constantin Stanislawsky of the Moscow Art Theatre. He had been one of her earliest admirers, when she first came to Russia. Since that dim past they had become great friends and mutually esteemed each other's sterling genius. In his autobiography, published some years ago, he writes very appreciatively about the dancer, and she in turn, in her

autobiography, has written admiringly about him. In 1921, however, neither of these books had been written or even thought of.

The two old friends had much to talk about, and both were heartily glad to see each other. Quite apart from his admiration and affection for the dancer, Stanislawsky was especially glad to get in touch again with some intelligent person from the outside world. Like all artists who are not politicians, he had suffered much during the revolutionary days. He had grown much older, but his beautifully expressive face still kept all its former charm. He spoke with Isadora of all their old friends and told her of the new work that he was doing. He hoped, he said, in more settled times, to take it outside Russia and show it to the publics of Germany and America. This led him to dwell again on the terrible times he had gone through, and Isadora, out of the fulness of her momentary and enthusiastic admiration for the communistic state, was moved to say : " *Mon cher*, you are faced with this dilemma ; either you must consider your life at an end and commit suicide or else you must begin life all over again by becoming a communist."

A few nights later he called to take Isadora and Irma to one of his new experiments : Tchaikowsky's opera *Eugène Onegin*. They sat in his box and watched the performance. It was given

without orchestra, the accompaniment being supplied by a piano placed on the stage in the wings. This, it seemed, was Stanislawsky's first experiment with opera. Since then his Second Studio Theatre has done many others, several of which—*Carmen*, *La Perichole*, *Madame Angot*, etc.—have been shown in New York. He was very anxious to know what his guests thought of the new work. Isadora told him with the courage of an old friend that she didn't like it at all. She never had been interested in opera as an art form. Indeed she had once, with great temerity, said so to Cosima Wagner, the widow of the greatest of all writers of opera.

" Music drama is nonsense. . . . One must speak, then sing, then dance. But the speaking is the brain, the thinking man. The singing is the emotion. The dancing is the Dionysian ecstasy which carries away all. It is impossible to mix them in any way, one with the other. Music drama is impossible ! "

The substance of this she repeated to Stanislawsky and added that, in any case, *Eugène Onegin* wasn't worth bothering about. It was too sentimentally romantic to be treated in such a realistic manner, especially in such stirring times. She ended her criticism by saying to him : " Stanislawsky, you must do bigger things than that. The ' Bacchæ ' of Euripides, for instance. I

have always dreamt of your directing this antique tragedy, with Eleonora Duse playing the rôle of Agave, while I with my pupils danced the choruses ! "

CHAPTER VI

A few nights after she was installed in the Geltzer apartment, Florinsky came to call. Isadora was about to sit down to dinner with some new acquaintances—mostly friends of the owner of the apartment, who seemed intent on helping the newcomer to get rid of the stock of tinned jams and foods that Gordon Selfridge had presented her with in London. Florinsky had called to see if Isadora would come with him to a soirée at which most of the leaders of the Communist party would be present. He had a car waiting outside to take the dancer there.

She was thrilled with the idea of meeting face to face the great men who had fought the revolution and established the new order. She somehow imagined, as she afterwards explained, that she would see a group of shining-faced idealists dressed like so many Tolstoys, in simple peasant garb, and with their love for humanity glowing like a nimbus about them. So she ran to change into what she thought would be an appropriate dress for the occasion. She soon appeared in her

best red tunic about which she had draped her scarlet cashmere shawl—the same shawl in which she had always danced her revolutionary dances and the *Marseillaise* ; the same shawl that she wore about her body on the night of September 14, 1927. Over her hair she bound a red tulle scarf, turban-wise. Then throwing a cloak round her shoulders she left with Florinsky for her first meeting with the communist leaders.

The party was given at the Karakhan mansion, which Claire Sheridan has described so well in the book telling of her Russian experiences. This house, which stands on the south side of the Moskova River, facing the Kremlin, once belonged to the Sugar King of Russia, and it reflected that worthy man's bad taste in the matter of interior decoration.

Isadora, radiant and excited, was shown with her escort into a large Salon, decorated, and over-decorated, in Louis XV style. At the large table in the centre of the room sat all the comrades, solemn, contented, and well-dressed. They were listening with looks that betokened varying degrees of interest to a lady who stood by the grand piano and warbled a French *Bergerette.*

" *Jeune fillette*
Profitez du temps,

Les Violettes
Se cueillent en Printemps ;
La, la, la, la, la, la, la
La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la !" } *Bis.*

Isadora could scarcely believe her ears or her eyes. She looked from the singer in evening dress up to the ceiling with its ersatz-Watteau minuetting figures. Her eyes then took in the room oozing gilt and bad taste ; then she looked at the '*tovarishi*' sitting about listening to the vocal inanities, just like any group of well-to-do middle-class people in any part of the civilised world. The entertainer had finished her '*Bergerette*' and was about to begin a '*Chanson Galante*,' when the outraged dancer stepped into the middle of the room.

"What do you mean," she cried, "by throwing out the bourgeoisie only to take their places and indulge in the same ridiculous antics as they used to do here in this very room. Here you all are sitting as they used to do, in this place full of bad art and furnishings of *mauvais goût*, listening to the same insipid music that they used to listen to. Nothing is changed. You have merely usurped their places. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.* You have made a revolution, you ought to be the first to do away with all this awful inheritance from the bourgeoisie. But here you are

out-Heroding Herod. You are not revolutionists. You are bourgeois in disguise. Usurpers ! "

In a deadly silence, Isadora, like an avenging angel, flame-clad, fiery-tongued, sailed out of the room followed by her astonished escort. When she left there was an uproar in the Salon. It was only calmed when some of the more important leaders at the table, looking at the room with new eyes, decided that the foreign comrade wasn't so far wrong. But the incident was much talked about, and even Lunatcharsky mentioned it in an article which he wrote later about the dancer.

When Isadora returned to the Geltzer apartment scarcely half an hour after she had left it, she was in a hilarious mood. With much gusto, she related to her friends her entry into and exit from the Communist soirée. With her superb pantomimic sense and her omnipresent sense of humour she regaled the company with imitations of the society vocalist and the various middle-class listeners.

A few days later Lunatcharsky came to call on her and make her acquaintance. For a long time this cultured author and playwright conversed with the dancer about her life and her art and her future in the Soviet state. The substance of this interview he set forth in an article which he published shortly afterwards, and which he titled " Our Guest." This article is much too long

to be quoted in its entirety, but some few extracts may be of interest :

" When Duncan announced her intention of coming to Russia, shrieks of astonishment and indignation were heard. At first the papers denied the rumour and then ascribed it to her craziness. Then they insinuated that she was leaving America and Europe because the public there had grown indifferent to her art. That, of course, was nonsense, and the writers knew it. Just before her decision to come to Russia she had received most advantageous offers from Holland and America, but she, with her natural frankness, refused them. Leonid Krassine told me that Duncan had been afraid of her farewell performance in London. The papers had already begun to stir up enmity on account of her ' Bolshevism.' Meanwhile, the tickets for the concert were selling out. The audience gave her a great ovation, which was also a tribute to her courage in undertaking the voyage to Russia. . . .

" What end had she in coming to Russia ? The main end was an educational one. She came to Russia with the approval of Narkompross and Narkomindel,[1] who had made her an offer to organise in this country a big school of a new type. . . . Duncan believed with all her soul that,

[1] The People's Commissariat for Education and The People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs.

in spite of the famine and the lack of necessities, in spite of the backwardness of the masses, in spite of the terrible seriousness of the moment and the consequent preoccupation of the government officials with other vital questions, a beginning of her idea could be made. . . . Her vision reaches far. She is thinking of a large government school with a thousand children. She is willing for the moment, however, to begin with a smaller number. They will receive their elementary education through our teachers. Their physical and æthestic education will be under Duncan's sole direction. . . .

" At present Duncan is going through a phase of rather militant communism that sometimes, involuntarily, makes us smile. (Here Lunatcharsky tells the story of Isadora's remark to Stanislawsky.) In another instance Duncan was asked by some of our communist comrades to a small, one might say, family, fête. She found it possible to call their attention to their bad communistic taste, because of the bourgeois surroundings, and because of their behaviour, which was so far from the flaming ideal she had painted in her imagination. It would have developed into a small scandal, if our comrades hadn't understood how much original charm was contained in the naïve criticism which was in substance true.

"The People's Commissariat of Education greets Russia's guest and believes that, on the occasion of her first public appearance, the proletariat will confirm the greeting. Duncan has been called the Queen of Movement, but of all her movements, this last one—her coming to Red Russia in spite of being scared off—is the most beautiful and demands the greatest applause."

CHAPTER VII

The first days of August followed one after another without any progress being made in the matter of the school ; and there was no sign of new living quarters being found. Isadora began to grow impatient and wondered if she had come to Russia for nothing. She hated the forced inaction and longed to start as soon as possible on her idea. To while away the time, she went walking about the city in the daytime and in the evening often went to the theatres, which were all free in those days.

As the month of August wore on, and there was still no sign of the school being started, Lunatcharsky sent his private secretary with Comrade Krasnostchokoff, the President of the Far Eastern Republic, to take Isadora to see a children's colony at Malakofka. After they had been shown over the house and grounds, Isadora gathered the children about her on the front lawn and gave them a lesson. They, not to be outdone in rhythmic courtesy, danced some of their peasant dances for her. Through an interpreter she spoke to them, saying : " These

are the dances of slaves you have danced. All the movements go down to the earth. You must learn to dance the dance of free people. You must hold your heads high and throw out wide your arms as though you would embrace the whole universe in a large fraternal gesture ! "

With her return to town the same wait for something to happen again began. Acquaintances came in during the day, and there were walks and visits to such theatres and concert halls as were open. Among the people who came to see Isadora were many of the familiars of the Geltzer household, who seemed to transfer their affections easily from one dancer to another. One of the group was a Mr. Benecktoff, an art dealer and composer. Although everybody was on rations, he always managed to have all kinds of good food and fine drinks.

One day, in the latter part of the month, he invited Isadora and Irma to his house for luncheon. There was a menu :

Caviar
Roast Chicken
Cauliflower—Green Peas
Compôte de Poires
Cakes—Coffee—Cigarettes

With the caviar there was Vodka, and a good red Burgundy was served with the fowl. The *pousse-café* was an excellent old cognac. The contrast between this all-but-banquet and the lunches that Isadora had to make from her rations—supplemented occasionally by the tinned soups, the jams, and the crackers of Mr. Gordon Selfridge—was so striking that she cried out when it was over : " Why, this is just like the Ritz." Then some musicians came in and played and sang for the guests. The genial host, charmed by Isadora's magnetic personality and wishing to betoken his admiration for her, presented her with an early Italian painting of three angelic musicians. (Isadora later hung this canvas over her bed and often remarked on the likeness of one of the angels to the poet Essenine.)

When the luncheon was over, the host decided that the only way to end the afternoon was to take a motor-boat and sail up the River to Varabiovy Gory—(Sparrow Hills, now called Lenin Hills). It was from this elevated spot that Napoleon, in 1812, first gazed at Moscow before making his entrance into it. The place has always been a favourite spot with the Muscovites. From the heights, particularly at sunset, one can see a magnificent view of the town and all its gleaming domes and spires and of the valley of the Moscova River.

When Isadora and her friends arrived at the wooded heights, they wandered about among the trees and by chance came upon a man for whom the dancer developed later a tremendous and lasting admiration. He was the Comrade Podvowsky, who in the first days of the Revolution had organised and inspired the famous Red Army. From the intensity of the campaign and the hardships and deprivations during the years 1917–1920, his health had broken down, and he lived in the Sparrow Hills woods with his family, recuperating. At the time of his meeting with Isadora he was the People's Commissar for Physical Education and was engaged with a small army of athletes in the task of constructing the stadium which is now one of the features of the countryside.

Isadora was strangely impressed by the personality of the man and talked with him at length through an interpreter. Arriving home, still vibrant from contact with this vivid being, she sat down and wrote out her impression of him. She felt that she wanted the whole world to know him, and when she had finished writing her pen-portrait, she sent it on to the editor of an English newspaper who, *mirabile dictu*, not only published it but sent the writer a cheque in payment for it. She was more thrilled by the receipt of that cheque than ever she had been

by the enormous sums received for her dancing, or by the applause of her admirers. For a long time she kept the little piece of paper that represented the first money earned by her pen. Finally, when food was scarce, she cashed it and used the money to buy apples for the children of her school !

The following is the article on Podvowsky, as it appeared in the newspaper :

" There is a man who lives on a hill which rises from a bend of the river. From this hill he overlooks all Moscow and the surrounding plains. He overlooks the shining golden domes, the coloured globes, and the crosses of the many churches, and the huge towers of the Kremlin, and in his imagination he peoples the city and the plains with a great new race. There he sees in vision the glorious youth which will be created for the country of the International. Like Prometheus, this man would give to humanity the flame for its regeneration.

" On the hill where he lives stands an immense ruined palace, which was built for one of the favourites of Catherine the Great. Its sturdy walls have withstood the wear of centuries, but within the ceilings have crumbled, and the floors remain but scaffoldings. From its topmost dome waves the red flag of the Revolution, and the man that lives on the hill looks up at this flag,

his eyes shining with love, and he says : ' By the force of this flag this palace will be rebuilt, transformed into a temple, and it will be inhabited by three thousand youths and maidens, who will here become strong and splendid athletes. A great band to work with free minds and perfect muscles for the future of mankind.'

" He points down to the Kremlin, and says : ' Here will be a mightier stronghold than the old Kremlin has ever been.' And as we hear the church bells of Moscow all chiming together, he says, with an indefinable expression of sweetness : ' Other bells will ring for other services.'

" As his voice ceases, we hear the singing of boyish voices and see tramping down the hillside towards the river a hundred naked youths. These are his first disciples. They live here on the hillside, five hundred strong, in tents. Young soldiers for the new battlefield in the fight for the creation of a finer, more beautiful mankind.

" As the man, Comrade Podvowsky, stands there on this high balcony of the great ruined palace, the red flag waving in the free heaven above his head, he looks down on his troops with an infinite love and clairvoyance in his eyes, such as one does not meet in the eyes of a human being, but only dreams of in the eyes of

a God ; and indeed, seeing him standing there, with this strong dream of a new world in his eyes, I turned to my companions and said : ' This great revolutionist, this finest of communists, Comrade Podvowsky, this is a God-like man.' "

CHAPTER VIII

After having written her pen-portrait of Podvowsky Isadora decided to go up the river next day, hoping to see him once more. They disembarked from the little motor-boat and walked about the wood looking for him. Failing to find the Commissar they lay down under the birch trees by the sloping river bank. And there he found them later. It is perhaps better to let Isadora tell about their meeting and subsequent conversation in her own words : they have their own savour, and reflect, as did her other " essay," the enthusiastic admiration she felt for this communist. The following account, which she wrote that same night, on her return home, is taken from a pencilled manuscript. It bears evidence of having been written very quickly and is given here uncorrected. We have merely added the punctuation necessary to make it more clear. Undoubtedly Isadora would have made other changes besides inserting commas and colons had she made use of this account in her proposed book of her Russian impressions.

" At Varabiovy Gory I was lying on the grass.

I looked up and saw, framed against the sky, a face which made an impression of strength, imagination, and a peculiar sweetness. This was the Comrade Podvowsky, who had seen me from his house near by and came to greet me. His strong hands raised me to my feet, and I looked into his eyes, brilliantly blue ; one moment hard and the next very soft and laughing.

" ' Now that you have come here you are my prisoner,' he said. ' I command all the Red Armies, so I can also commandeer you. You are to stay here and give us your Idea. I have heard of your Idea. It has gone all over the world.'

" ' But how can my Idea be of use to soldiers ? ' I asked.

" ' What, you do not know that we have here new soldiers ? ' he said. ' The *naked soldier*,[1] without uniform and without weapons. And women soldiers, too. On the top of the hill there, in the wood, is the camp of youth. There are five hundred youths, and girls too, living in the out-of-doors there in the valley. We are building a great stadium for fifty thousand people. Next summer it will be ready. We are preparing great festivals, dancing, songs, music. On the other hill, where you see that great round castle, we are preparing a house for two thousand children, who will be raised according to the ideals of the

[1] Athletes

new world. You must stay and help us with all this. Look, here come my young soldiers : they are coming down to the river to swim.'

" I looked. From the heights, descending, came a hundred young boys. They were naked, wearing only little bathing-drawers. They were singing : they looked wonderful stepping down the wooded slopes to the rhythm of their singing. They were followed by a group of girls. I was sorry to see the girls wear bloomers and shirt-waists. They didn't look as fine and free as the boys. I told Podvowsky at once that the bloomers were all wrong and the swimming-drawers, too. I told him they ought all to wear short tunics like Achilles, and the girls should not follow after the boys, but that they should dance down the hill together, hand in hand. I asked what the song was they were singing. He translated. The words were something like this :

Death to Speculators !
Death to Parasites !
We are the new free army of the earth !

" ' Death to Speculators ! You see,' said Podvowsky, ' that is why the boys walk first. They have grim work to do, and perhaps we have not come to the dancing stage yet. These are the soldiers of the Revolution ! '

HOTOGRAPH TAKEN OF COMMISSAR PODVOWSKY AND ISADORA DUNCAN, SPARROW HILLS, MOSCOW, AUGUST, 1921.

" Podvowsky lives in a simple log cabin with his wife and five little children, the youngest a baby. They all live with Spartan simplicity ; the children go barefoot all summer. Once, when inspecting the ruined castle, his little boys ran right over a floor covered with broken glass. I tried to keep them back, but Podvowsky stopped me.

" ' They are future soldiers of the Revolution,' he said, ' they must learn to be afraid of nothing.'

" They say the Bolsheviks are bandits. Podvowsky is a high Commissar. He might, if he wanted, live in luxury in a palace with a Rolls-Royce. All these things are at his disposal, but he prefers to live in two bare rooms, and he eats every day exactly the same rations that every soldier eats. He said to me :

" ' That is why my soldiers follow me and listen to me, because they know that, war or peace, I share the same hardships and eat the same food as they do. And that is why, when the White Army was near, and we were a mere handful of half-starved soldiers, we could force them back. It was because my soldiers knew that, for the Ideal, I had lived and suffered and starved just as they. And so they were ready to follow me to death, or anywhere ! '

" And as Podvowsky spoke to me, I felt just as one of his soldiers ; that I could follow him to

death, or anywhere. Podvowsky is a great heroic soul. A man with a heart and pity resembling Christ. With a brain like Nietzsche and a vision like the men of the future.

" Once in his bare room I gave his children a lesson in dancing. He said : ' Isadora, it is wonderful. I hardly know my children. In one hour they are transformed. But I am afraid you would soften them. They must be raised, you know, as soldiers of the Revolution.'

" ' Yes,' I said, ' that is fine, but how can my dancing soften them ? I will teach them great heroic movements. Your girls will dance, and your boys will dance like Sophocles before the armies, and inspire them to new deeds of heroism.'

" ' Well,' he replied, ' if you will teach them such dances, you yourself must live more heroically. Isadora, Europe has somewhat spoiled your fine heroic spirit. Many years of success have softened you. I recognise the spirit, but you must come here and live with us as we live. Then you will be complete.'

" Alas ! I flushed before the spare figure, the Christlike face, the heroic eyes. What was I, a poor pagan sybarite, used to soft beds, good food ? Alas ! Alas ! Why is it that the artist and the saint are so far removed ? Never has a saint been an artist and never has an artist been a saint—

Fra Angelico—Saint Francis : yes, the exceptions that prove the rule.

" One night Podvowsky took me to the top of the mountain and showed me a ruin. ' There,' he said, ' once stood a fashionable restaurant. The rich bourgeoisie of Moscow, after they had dined sumptuously and exhausted their pleasure with the ballet, used to drive out here and sup with champagne and gypsies until four or five in the morning. Now it is a ruin.'

" I looked over the black cinders and saw the moon rise over the golden dome of the Church of the Redeemer away in the distance.

" ' What you say is true,' I replied, ' of the sacred gifts of life these people knew nothing. With gypsies and champagne they drowned their consciences. Of the people of Russia, of the children of Russia, they never thought at all.'

" ' Now follow me,' said Podvowsky. He took my hand and led me to the beginning of a little path that descended the mountain. As we went down, the path grew more steep and more and more difficult. My feet slipped. I confess I became frightened. The branches tore my dress, my arms, and I feared to fall. It was very dark. Podvowsky gave me his hand : ' Lean on me, follow me.' Then the stones slipped beneath my feet, the path became more and more difficult, precipitous. I adored the genius of Podvowsky, but I admit

I began to feel some anger against him for bringing me down this dangerous and impassable path. After a while we arrived near the river. I was completely exhausted, and I turned to Podvowsky with some reproach, when I heard his voice :

" ' Dear Isadora,' he said, lifting my hand to his lips, ' I have taken you down this little tortuous path ; it is a symbol. I wanted to show to you how, if you wish to remain in Russia, your way must be down just such a narrow, steep path. In your life you have known great theatres with applauding publics. That is all false. You have known *trains de luxe* and expensive hotels. That is all false. Ovations—false. All false. Now you've come to Russia. By this little dangerous way, I wanted to teach you that if you want to work for Russia, such must be your way. Not the grand opera house, orchestras, applauding publics. No, no, that will lead to nothing. If you want results for your work, go, go alone amongst the people. Dance your dances in little barns in the winter : in open fields in the summer. Teach the people the meaning of your dances. Teach the children. Don't ask for thanks.' "

CHAPTER IX

Unable, as always, to sit with folded hands doing nothing, Isadora, besides writing out the Podvowsky articles, also wrote in French a letter which she forwarded to the Paris Press. It was printed in the columns of *Humanité* and from there copied, in part, in many English and American newspapers. Isadora headed this letter with one of her favourite quotations, from "Thus Spake Zarathustra" :

> "*I love the man who creates higher than himself and perishes in this way.*"

"You await my impressions of Moscow. I cannot, after the manner of H. G. Wells and other writers who have been here, give you political impressions. I know nothing about politics. I can only give you my impressions as an artist, and these impressions are more felt than reasoned.

"In each human being, and above all in children and artists, there exists a sixth sense that enables us to divine the psychology of a soul, or a group of men, or a town. It is this sixth sense

that has dictated all my artistic career. It was in listening to this voice that I left Europe, where Art has been crushed by Commercialism. And it is by this sixth sense that I divine Moscow. For one cannot judge that which has happened here in looking about one at the material things. It is with clairvoyant eyes that one must look. For all that is on the surface here is only momentary, and the truth is deeply hidden in the interior of the soul of the country. It is to that great collective soul that the miracle offers itself.

" I am convinced that here in Russia is the greatest miracle that has happened to humanity for two thousand years.

" We are too close to it to understand, and it is probably only those who will be alive in a hundred years who will understand that by the reign of communism humanity has made a great step forward from which it can never go back.

" Moscow is a miracle city, and the martyrdom submitted by Russia will be for the future that which the crucifixion was. The human soul will be more beautiful, more generous, and greater than ever dreamt by Christ.

" I repeat, we are too close to all this to understand.

" Had we lived at the time of Christ we would not have understood either. We would have seen a simple man followed by poor disciples, and his

crucifixion would have seemed to us like a banal catastrophe.

" And yet the spiritual truth was quite otherwise.

" The spiritual truth of that which passes here I see as a shining vision of the future. The prophesies of Beethoven, of Nietzsche, of Walt Whitman are being realised. All men will be brothers, carried away by the great wave of liberation that has just been born here in Russia.

" This is the message that my soul received, given to me by the prophetic voices that arise out of communist Russia.

" This is the message I would fain send you.

" (*signed*) ISADORA DUNCAN."

Following Isadora's visits to Sparrow Hills, Mrs. Podvowsky invited her and Irma to come and stay there in a two-roomed log-cabin that she had found for them. The idea of living the simple life, like the Podvowsky family, appealed momentarily to Isadora, bored as she was by the wearing wait for something to be done about her school. Besides, she was stifled in the Geltzer apartment, and thought that the country spelled Freedom.

If Freedom means living in an *isba*—three people in two rooms—sleeping on the floor, enduring the most primitive hygienic arrangements, eating rough food and drinking goat's

milk, then Isadora suffered Freedom for about a week in the woods of Sparrow Hills.

The day after the arrival at the *isba*, Isadora and Irma, simply clad in white tunics, with bare feet in sandals, went walking by the river. When they were weary of their promenade they sat down by wooded bank that sloped down to the river. Round the bend came a rowing-boat with four men and a woman in it. Apparently attracted by the two white-clad figures, the rowers directed their boat towards the bank, and mooring it, scrambled up the slope. Before they arrived at the spot where the two dancers sat, they had recognised Isadora, and one of the band asked if he might take a snapshot. Isadora consented and was then introduced to the group. The chief of the little band was Michael Borodine, who had come to Russia from America, where he had been a school teacher in Chicago. (Borodine's name has since been in all the papers of the world in connection with his work as adviser to the Government of Southern China.) The others with him on that day were some German revolutionists who had fled Bavaria after the abortive Red uprising there.

Isadora was much taken by Borodine—perhaps because he was the only one who spoke English ; perhaps also because he was by far the most handsome man of the group—tall and dark, slow

of speech, and altogether a charming and cultured personality. They all talked until long after sunset, Isadora giving most of her attention to Borodine, who repaid her in kind. The following day, he and his friends motored out from the city to have luncheon at Isadora's *isba*. The luncheon consisted of goat's milk, an omelette which Jeanne had made of a few precious eggs, procured with as much trouble as though they had been eggs of the extinct dodo, two raw tomatoes, and bread. Having lived for days on end on black bread and dried fish, the communist comrades thought the luncheon a lavish one and a marvel of culinary art.

After the lunch the party all went walking along the highway through the fields. Isadora and her dark-eyed escort strayed behind the others, and far from their profane eyes she danced for Borodine as the Flower Maidens before Parsifal, scattering rose leaves about him in her most seductive way. But Borodine, like Podvowsky, had thought of nothing but his duty to the cause. No entangling alliances, in the manner of the former Grand Dukes and the dancers of the Imperial Ballet. After all Isadora Duncan was only a dancer, and this communist could not afford to compromise his political career with her, no matter how seductive and genial she seemed to him. . . .

When some of the other inhabitants of Sparrow Hills had heard that the great Isadora Duncan was living in their midst, they gave a reception and concert in her honour at the big sanatorium near by. Among the guests was an old man who was pointed out to Isadora as : " Mr. Braunstein, the father of Trotsky ! " He came over to the distinguished visitor to be introduced. Beaming at him, she said in German : " I must congratulate you on your wonderful son."

He didn't seem to be at all flattered and replied somewhat gruffly : " Ach, what is that to me ? I'm not a communist. I had six mills, and they have taken them all away from me." Then mumbling to himself he said : " Wonderful son indeed ! Wonderful son indeed ! "

Before Isadora left, he invited her to have tea with him the following afternoon, and she accepted with pleasure. He lived at the Sanatorium in a tiny bare room and was very discontented with his lot. He told his visitors all his troubles, seemingly glad to pour out his heart in German to the sympathetic non-communist listeners.

CHAPTER X

After a week of the simple life on Sparrow Hills Isadora decided to move back into town. She had had enough discomfort to last her a lifetime. Moreover, there was another and better reason for breaking away from the too primitive *isba* and going back to Moscow : the officials of the Commissariat of Education had at last managed to find a dwelling-place for her, in a large building that could also eventually be used to house the school and its pupils. The building they had commandeered was a private house that stood on the once fashionable Pretchistenka Street. It had been the property of Ushkoff, a wealthy tea-plantation owner, whose wife, the well-known Balachova, was one of the leading members of the Moscow Opera Ballet. It amused Isadora to go from the apartment of one famous prima ballerina to the *hôtel privé* of another. She was making progress ! She wondered how long it would be before the whole ballet would finally cede to the dynamic freedom of her Art and her School.

The owner of the house and Madame Balachova

had both fled from Russia a few months before and had found their way to Paris, the haven of so many Russian emigrants. About the same time, Isadora was making her final arrangements for her departure to Russia and was anxious to sub-let her house with its large studio in the Rue de la Pompe in Passy. Various people, hearing of this, called to see the place. One visitor, a Russian woman, was most interested and said she was very anxious to find a place. She had just arrived in Paris and wanted to settle down. When she had been shown over Isadora's house and studio she decided not to rent it—there was no *salle-à-manger*! Later they were told that "the-Russian-lady-who-wanted-a-dining-room" was the well-known Moscow ballerina, Balachova.

So here was Isadora in Moscow, now, by one of those strange coincidences that so often happened in her life, entering into Madame Balachova's house. What would have happened if the ballerina had rented the house in the Rue de la Pompe and had later learned that Isadora was living in her house in Moscow? Would she have cried "Quits!" and refused to pay the rent? As it was, the Russian man who did sub-lease it sent the rent very seldom, and then only after an avalanche of protesting letters, notes from lawyers, and importunate visits from Isadora's

friends. All this despite the fact that Isadora, with her usual disdain for financial details, had let him have it for a ridiculous sum, to be paid quarterly in French francs.

When the ballet dancer had fled Moscow, the authorities had placed their seals upon the doors of the two master's rooms ; the bedroom and the boudoir. These were the only two rooms left to the wealthy owners, when the house was confiscated after the Revolution. The other rooms of the house had already been turned over to as many homeless families as could be crowded into them. The *objets d'art* were, of course, first removed, as were also the enormous mahogany beds and the best pieces of furniture from the two sealed rooms—these had been lifted by Bela Kun for his own private apartment in Moscow.

The whole house—even when denuded of the movable things, save, naturally, the piano, the massive oak furnishings of the dining-room, the settees, and sofas, and other such heavy objects as could not easily be taken or pocketed or moved by two hands—gave a good idea of the opulent bad taste of a rich, Russian bourgeois interior. All the ceilings were painted and stuccoed, and each room was decorated in a different style. One entered from Pretchistenka and came upon a terra-cotta tinted Pompeian room that had four

marble columns and marble benches, whose backs were decorated with bas-reliefs of nymphs and satyrs. In a niche stood a marble copy of the Venus of Knidos. From this room one ascended by a broad white marble stairway to the grand hall that led to the master's rooms. This hall had simili-Gobelins on the walls, and its ceiling was decorated by six panels, each one figuring an ancient God : Zeus, Apollo, Aphrodite, Hera, Mars, Athena, all sweetly painted.

The two rooms destined for Isadora and Irma were destitute of beds and ordinary furnishings, as we have already said. The boudoir, which had once been decorated in the Louis XV style, and whose walls had been stripped of the expensive, figured, olive-green silk that had once covered them, possessed two outstanding features : a large mirror, dripping with gilt cupids and rococo curlicues, that stood over a brass-encrusted rose-wood commode ; and an enormous, yet beautifully delicate Saxe china candelabrum. In one corner of the room was a dais enclosed by a gilded, wooden balustrade ; on this elevation had once stood a monstrous-great v-shaped sofa, gilded, brocaded, and rococo. Facing this, in the opposite corner, was a marble cupid, "*Der Freischutz*," caught in the act of snatching off the bandage over his eyes to watch coyly whoever might sit on the sofa. A flower-painted ceiling

with deadly pink Watteau medallions and much gilded stucco work looked down on these remnants of former splendour.

In the large bed-chamber that Isadora chose as her room, all that remained to tell of the former grandeur was a huge canopy, crowned by a fierce-looking, brassy, Napoleonic eagle, under which the ample beds of the former owners had once stood. Under it now was what was called a camp-bed. It looked lost and pathetically insignificant in the immensities of the empty, deserted room, that measured fifty feet by thirty. A door led to the bathroom, the only one that the many chambered house contained. It was noticeable that there were Napoleonic emblems on all the three heavy mahogany doors leading out of the bedroom. Each door had six panels with brass beadings ; on each of the two topmost panels were affixed brazen eagles with outspread wings ; the middle panels had large, diamond-shaped, brass frames, in the centre of which were brass medallions of Napoleon and Josephine, one profiled head upon another ; the lower panels had brassy N's surrounded by brass wreaths. Judging from the wealth of Napoleons and Napoleonic pictures and symbols all over the vast house—there were several statues, huge oil paintings, and stucco motifs on the various ceilings of the different rooms—one could say with some

certainty that the tea merchant and his dancing spouse had a somewhat exaggerated admiration for the " petit caporal."

Isadora, with some silken, vari-coloured scarves thrown over the Empire candelabra, and some rugs over the divan, soon transformed her room into something less brutally stylistic. Then she removed the forlorn, eagle-crowned canopy, and later, as it grew colder, built a great brick stove, Russian style, in the centre of the room. This done, she began to think of the arrangements for starting the school. Bit by bit, the occupants were put out of the various rooms : the Empire Room, the Chinese Room, the Japanese Room, the depressing, oak-panelled, heavy, German-Gothic dining-room, and the Turkish Room that led into a Winter Garden walled with leprous rocks, from which sprang or dangled mangy cacti and withering ivy. With these rooms ready to receive them, Isadora began to clamour to the authorities for children to start the school with.

Isadora clamoured for the children, but instead they sent to the Balachova house a collection of adults. As though coming into a sort of Noah's Ark, they were in pairs, " Two of every kind of animal " : two porters, two maids, two secretaries, two typists, two chefs, etc., etc. The two chefs decked themselves out in spotless linen and put

on well-ironed white caps and proceeded to the kitchen. There they found, however, that there was not a casserole or a kettle in the place. When the necessary kitchen furnishings, including the inevitable samovar, had finally been procured, they discovered that there was nothing to cook in them !

Everybody was on rations in Moscow. Isadora and Irma Duncan, being artistes, were entitled to what was known as the "*paiok rabotnikof umstvienova truda*," or ration for brain-workers. This consisted of a certain amount of white flour, pressed caviar, tea, and sugar. Once a fortnight, Jeanne went with her big market basket to the distributing office in the Kremlin to collect the rations for her *tovarish*-mistress. And once a fortnight, when the rations arrived at the house, Isadora with her usual unthinking generosity gave a "*bliny* party" to all her friends—mostly half-starved poets and artists. They seemed to look forward to these days. In a few hours the supply of white flour was exhausted in the making of *bliny* (pancakes), on which was spread the supply of caviar.

For the meals of the other days that followed these *bliny* feasts, the white-capped chefs had only potatoes on which to exercise their culinary skill. At each meal they served the tubers in divers guises : they made them palatable by boiling,

frying, mashing. They brought them to the table on crest-embossed, chased silver platters and set them down as potatoes *sautées*, *pont-neuf*, *soufflées*, *lyonnaises*, *boulanger*, *paysannes*, *rissolées*, *à la vapeur*, *purées au lait de chevre*, *en lacet*, *en salade*, etc., etc. And when they had wearied their professional brains thinking up new ways of serving them, they brought them to the table on the heavy, aristocratic silver plate as *pommes en robe de chambre*—potatoes with their jackets on.

A few days after Isadora had settled in her new home, her friend Leonid Krassine came to see her. After dinner in the studio—the depressing, oak-panelling of the heavy Gothic dining-room had been covered over by Isadora's famous blue curtains, and her blue-green carpet had been laid over the bare floor—she entertained her distinguished guest. When a young violinist, who was among those present, began to play Schubert's "*Ave Maria*," Isadora arose and moved to the far end of the room. There in the dim lights she began to dance. This supreme and moving poem of maternity—one of her most lovely creations—was the first dance that she did in her new studio: this was the rhythmic dedication of the Isadora Duncan School.

With the coming of Pierre Luboschitz, a young pianist, Isadora and Irma were able to pass some

of their hours of waiting in practising their old dances and working out new ones. During this period Isadora composed two new dances to music by Scriabine. When she showed these to some friends, they were overwhelmed. Into these two études of the Russian composer the dancer had compressed all the horror and the ghastly relentlessness of the Famine that then stalked over the Volga district. There was a grimness, a poignancy, and a terrible power in these two dances that would have moved the heart of the most steeled and resolute adversary of Soviet Russia.

By the middle of October—just three months after Isadora Duncan had sailed from London—the doors of number 20 Pretchistenka were opened to let in the children who were to be chosen for the school. They flocked in hundreds, but, as has been said on another occasion: "Many are called but few are chosen." Of all the children examined, only fifty of the most talented were accepted for the future school. From then on until the third of December, when the school was formally opened and quite ready to receive its little pensioners, they came each day to receive their elementary lessons from Isadora and Irma.

As the October days began to grow shorter and more sharply cold, they began to wonder about the winter, for in anticipation of their stay in the

warm Crimea, they had not brought with them any heavy clothes, and certainly no furs. Krassine, to whom they spoke, suggested that they should go to the fur storage warehouse and there choose garments. He obtained a written order for them. With much excitement they drove to the warehouse, and Irma suggested to Isadora that they ought to choose good sable coats now that they had the chance of getting them for nothing. Isadora wouldn't hear of such a thing.

"We must be like the other working people. We will each choose one of these nice, sheepskin coats that the peasants wear. Like these two women over there," she said, pointing to two peasant women shuffling along the street and wearing the smelly, wide-skirted coats that are made of roughly prepared sheepskin, with the fleece worn on the inside. The crudely tanned outside skin of the one was dyed black and the other bright orange.

"Aren't they beautiful?" asked the quixotic Isadora.

When they arrived at the warehouse they were shown into a veritable Aladdin's Cave, icy-cold. The sight that met their eyes would have made any member of the Fur Vendors' Union turn apoplectic with envy and covetousness. On racks and hangers, rows on rows on rows of them, were coats, pelisses, neck-pieces, stoles, capes, wraps,

and rugs of all the most expensive furs in the world. There were rich velvet capes lined with silver fox, used in other days for wrapping up well-clothed aristocratic bodies when they went sleigh-riding. There were pelisses, in untold numbers, of ermine, mink, sable, Persian lamb. Hundreds of coats were there, made of one rich fur and lined with another ; and thousands of simpler coats of every known wearable skin, with the vulgar exception of sheepskin and rabbit. Neck-pieces of single, superb, blue foxes hung together in colourful bunches, and there were others of silver fox, ermine, sable. Ample carriage and sleigh rugs of bear, red or white fox, mink, stone-marten, squirrel, and even sable were there in toppling piles. While all about were garments of all shapes and sizes, whose age could sometimes be told from the cut of the sleeves.

After gazing long on all these wonders and passing up and down among them examining and stroking the furry softnesses, Isadora made her choice—a marten coat lined with ermine. It was the poorest looking specimen she could find, and judging from its voluminous leg o' mutton sleeves, it dated from the end of the 19th century. For Irma she chose an old-fashioned, long, mink coat with a high sable collar. Together they walked out of the warehouse with the garments over their arms. At the office they had to leave

the coats, until they were evaluated. When a week had passed without any sign of the furs arriving at Pretchistenka, Isadora asked one of the secretaries to ring up the warehouse. The inquirer was told that if Comrade Duncan would care to pay so many thousand *gold* roubles or so many milliard paper ones, she could certainly have the two coats sent on to her house.

The epilogue to the fur-coat incident came a few weeks later, when Isadora was rehearsing at the theatre. She herself had gone through her rehearsal with the orchestra and was about to rehearse the children when the first violin looked at his watch and rose to go. His time was up. Not for Lenin himself would he work overtime. Isadora, with the aid of an interpreter, said : " You know the children have been standing about all this time on the draughty stage waiting patiently for their rehearsal."

The leader made no answer and, giving a sign to the rest of the musicians, he again rose to go. Isadora began again : " I have come all this way to help the children of Russia. I have willingly sacrificed much for this task. Surely, comrade, you can sacrifice a few minutes to play for these children."

The first violinist growled up at the interpreter : " Yes, we know what she came to Russia for. She came to get a free sable coat." And with

mocking laughter they all walked from the orchestra pit, leaving Isadora, humiliated to the point of tears, to go on with the rehearsal for the performance which she was to give free to the workers of Moscow.

CHAPTER XI

Before Isadora Duncan left London in July she paid a visit with some friends to the house of a fashionable spae-wife, who said to her :

" You are going on a long journey to a land with a light blue sky. You will be rich, very rich, I see millions and millions, and even billions, lying about. You will marry . . . "

At this point Isadora had ungraciously laughed in the face of the fortune-teller and refused to listen to any more nonsense. For while she knew that she was going on a long journey, and while she could also imagine herself enriched to the point of being a millionaire, if not a billionaire, she could not seriously listen to anyone who told her that she was to be married this side of Paradise.

When she arrived in Russia, the land of the light blue sky, she found that the value of the rouble had fallen so low that in order to buy even one box of matches it was necessary to expend a sum of roubles running to astronomical figures. At that rate, Isadora was a millionaire many times over. And now, to cap the last part of the

fortune-teller's words, here she was at the beginning of November meeting the young man she was later to marry : Sergei Alexandrevitch Essenine.

This young writer was considered one of the most talented poets of the post-revolutionary group. He was a Russian peasant ; tall, blue-eyed, golden-locked. There was something in his moral and poetic make-up of both Robert Burns and Arthur Rimbaud, *Le Poète Maudit.* As a boy, he had tended the horses on his uncle's farm, Being both beautiful and precocious, he attracted the attention of the pope of his native village. Constantinov, in the province of Reisan. This priest educated him and sent him to school in St. Petersburg. There, still beautiful and still precocious, he attracted the attention of the poet Klouyeff, whose disciple he became. He was even presented to the Czarina, who appeared to take more than a passing interest in the budding and fair young poet. After the revolution, in which he took an active part, he settled down, if it can be so expressed, in Moscow, and joined the noisy *Imaginist* group founded by the poet and novelist Mariengoff.

In a novel recently written by Mariengoff and titled : *A Novel Without Lies*, there is set down the story of the days passed together by the two poets. In one part of his story the narrator tells of an

evening they spent in the Ermitage, a sort of summer amusement park in Moscow. The well-known futurist artist and stage decorator for the Kamerny Theatre, George Jacouloff, came towards them and without any prelude said :

" ' Do you want me to introduce you to Isadora Duncan ? '

" Essenine jumped from his seat.

" ' Where is she ? Where ! '

" ' Here. She's a wonderful woman.'

" Essenine seized Jacouloff by the hand :

" ' Take us to her right away ! '

" We started off looking for Isadora. From the Mirrored Room to the Winter Theatre ; from the Winter Theatre to the Summer Theatre ; from the Summer Theatre to the Operette ; and from there back again to the Park, looking at all the benches. But there was no sign anywhere of Isadora Duncan.

" ' Devil take it ! She must have left.'

" ' Here, George, here ! '

" And again we ran to the Mirrored Room, to the Winter Theatre and from the Winter Theatre to the Operette, to the Summer Theatre, to the Park.

" ' George dear, here, here ! "

" I said : ' What's the matter, Sergei ? What's biting you ? '

" Essenine was sombre and annoyed. Now it

seems that there was something fatal in his feverish, inexplicable desire to meet this woman he had never seen, and who was to play in his life a rôle so great, so sad. I might even say pernicious. At the same time I hasten to add that the influence that Isadora Duncan had over Essenine does not in any way lower this wonderful woman, this great human being, this artist of genius."

Some time later, Isadora went to tea at Jacouloff's studio. There were many artists and poets gathered together there, but Essenine was not among them. The host was disappointed that he had not turned up before the dancer left. He made arrangements to have an evening party the following week, and asked Isadora if she would care to come again. She was in her element with the Bohemian company and was only too pleased to accept the invitation. Besides, such gay parties were few and far between in that epoch. Isadora, therefore, on the evening of the party, decked herself out in her favourite red dress, arranged her hair and perfumed herself as though she was on the way to a supper at the house of her friend Cécile Sorel in Paris. She arrived at the Jacouloff studio after midnight. Mariengoff, who was there, describes her entrance and what followed :

" . . . She advanced slowly, with grace. She

looked round the room with eyes that seemed like saucers of blue delft, and her gaze was stopped by the sight of Essenine. Her mouth, small and delicate, smiled at him. Isadora then reclined on the couch, and Essenine came and sat at her feet. She ran her fingers through his curly hair and said : ' *Solotaia golova !* ' (Golden head !)

" We were surprised to hear her say these two words, she who only knew about a dozen Russian words all told. Then she kissed him on the lips, and again from her mouth, small and red like a bullet-wound, came with pleasant caressing accent, a Russian word : ' *Anguel !* ' (Angel !)

" She kissed him again and said : ' *Tchort !* ' (Devil !)

At four o'clock in the morning Isadora Duncan and Essenine left. . . ."

A few evenings later, Isadora was entertaining some friends in her studio. In the dimly lighted room, whose blue draperies seemed to reach far up into space, there was a calm, an almost religious silence, for Isadora had just danced a Chopin mazurka. The onlookers had seen before their eyes one lovely movement melting into another—beauty made manifest. And as the last notes of the piano died away, and Isadora walked towards her silent, moved friends, whose clouded eyes spoke their thanks,

the exalted mood of the moment was shattered by a dozen feet pounding on the stairs and half-a-dozen drunken voices lifted in raucous laughter and vinous wit.

Into the room—the calm Isadoran temple—there burst a group of *Imaginist* poets led by Essenine and Koussikoff with his omnipresent balalaika. The high priestess, who at any other time would have driven the intruders forth with words more cutting than whip-thongs, welcomed these noisy followers of Bacchus and Apollo.

Through a friendly interpreter, she said to Essenine, whom she was overjoyed to see : " I'm going to do a dance all for you ! "

She arose from her divan and asked the pianist to play a Chopin waltz that she felt would appeal to the lyric soul of the golden-haired poet. And with what rapturous joy and seductive grace she moved through the rhythms of the dance ! When the music ended she came forward with her ingenuous smile, her eyes radiant, her hands outstretched towards Essenine, who was now talking loudly to his companions, and she asked him how he had liked her dance. The interpreter translated. Essenine said something coarse and brutal that brought howls of coarse and brutal laughter from his drunken friends. The friend who was acting as interpreter said with evident hesitation to Isadora :

"He says it was—awful . . . and that he can do better than that himself!"

And even before the whole speech was translated to the crestfallen and humiliated Isadora, the poet was on his feet dancing about the studio like a crazy man. The balalaika twanged, and his fellow Bohemians shouted approvingly.

Music, peace, grace, beauty—all had flown from the temple as the roysterers had tramped in, and they were soon followed by the friends, who, earlier in the evening, had received their benediction.

CHAPTER XII

The fourth anniversary of the Russian Revolution was to be celebrated on the seventh of November, 1921. Lunatcharsky asked Isadora if she would dance at the gala performance that they intended giving on the evening of that date, in the Bolshoi (Grand) Theatre. As they wished her to be the only one on the programme, it was really a great honour and a tribute to her coming to Russia in the face of so much calumny and opposition. So Isadora told the friendly Lunatcharsky that she would be proud to make her first public appearance in Soviet Russia under such conditions. All the seats were to be free, the tickets being distributed among the workers' organisations and the Red Army.

Isadora decided to do her Tchaikowsky numbers : the *Sixth* (*Pathétique*) *Symphony* and the *Marche Slave*. And, as a special homage to her audience, she composed a dance to the official hymn of the new régime, the *Internationale*. When the organisers of the gala heard what the dancer's programme was to be, they were a little nervous. The *Marche Slave* upset them. They all knew that

several bars of the ancient Czarist hymn, " God Protect the Czar," were woven into the musical fabric of the Tchaikowsky march : not very much to be sure, yet enough to send out an emotional spark that might kindle a flaming counter-revolutionary demonstration, even in an audience that would be hand-picked. So Comrade Lunatcharsky was delegated to see if the dancer's interpretation of the music had anything treasonable about it. He came to the final rehearsal and watched Isadora mime, to Tchaikowsky's stirring music, the tragedy and oppression of the Russian people and their final liberation. He left the theatre overwhelmed by the emotional power and rare tragic beauty of the dancer's creation.

The Grand Theatre of Moscow holds over 3,000 people, but ten times that number of eager communists wanted to see the much-talked-about Isadora Duncan dance. The *Pravda*, the *Isvestia*, and all the workers' gazettes had told their readers about the internationally famous dancer, who had so courageously left the " crumbling, capitalistic Europe " to come and work for the children of the new Soviet Republic. Naturally they were all eager to seize the opportunity of seeing her for nothing.

So it was, then, that on the seventh of November, 1921, Isadora Duncan danced her Tchaikowsky

programme for a free audience of "workers." The tickets, however, had been carefully distributed, and the audience consisted of the élite of the Communist party, various commissars, government officials, the heads and officials of the different Trades Unions, representatives of the Red Army, and all the foreign correspondents. Outside in the snow stood the people Isadora really wanted to dance for, the less fortunate workers; a mob of disappointed, stamping, pushing men and women. They were only kept from rushing the doors of the theatre by a vigilant cordon of police.

The first part of the programme was the usual political speech that is always delivered on such occasions. In this, of course, Russia is no different from any other country celebrating its political birthday. But much as the Russian audience love a good speech—the longer the better—this gala audience was not giving its whole attention to Comrade Anatole Vasilief Lunatcharsky, the People's Commissar for Education. They were awaiting, with as much control as possible, the appearance of Duncan in the *Marche Slave*. When Lunatcharsky ended his speech in a glowing peroration, and the orchestra struck up the *Internationale*, they all sprang to their feet and sang the hymn lustily.

Of Isadora's part of the gala programme, it

is perhaps best to let the critic of the Moscow *Isvestia* speak :

" It is a long time since the Grand Theatre has seen such a *Fête d'Art*. It was an harmonious fête of the freed human body. Isadora Duncan —dancer. But it was not dancing in the ordinary technical sense. It was the most beautiful interpretation in movement and miming of musical *chefs d'œuvres* ; and also an interpretation of the revolution.

" Never for a moment did the orchestra follow the artist ; there was no slavish accompaniment. On the contrary, the orchestra played independently ; and with plastic movements, Duncan completed, explained, and illustrated the tragic rhythms of the *Sixth Symphony* of Tchaikowsky. One can differ from the interpretation of certain parts, but, even so, to dance this enormous *Symphonie Pathétique*—this symphony of joy, sorrow, life, and death, enthusiasm, and rebirth, of descent into the depths, and of victorious uprising—holding the house the whole time in an intense state, is a great triumph.

" I must especially mention the *Marche Slave* of Tchaikowsky. This march is not only Slavonic, not only excessively patriotic, it is a pan-slavic, imperialistic march ; with its repeated strains of the Czarist hymn, its mood is counter-revolutionary. By her inimitable plastic and mimic

execution of this work, Isadora showed once more what an inspired artist can make of such an old-fashioned thing. Against the background of the Tchaikowsky music, Duncan depicted in moving gestures a bent, oppressed, heavy-laden, fettered slave, who falls exhausted to his knees. Now see what happens to this slave at the first notes of the accursed Czarist hymn. He lifts his weighed-down head, and his face shows an awful grimace of hate. With all his force he straightens himself and breaks his chains. Then he brings from behind his back his crooked and stiffened arms—forward to a new and joyful life. The allegory was understood by every one. The cortege of the slave on the stage was the *via dolorosa* of the oppressed Russian people who break their chains. In Duncan's interpretation, the Czarist hymn sounded, paradoxically enough, revolutionary. Against the background of this hymn triumphed the revolution."

But the thrill of the evening for the enraptured audience came when, after the emotion of the *Marche Slave* had been calmed, the orchestra began to play the *Internationale*, and Isadora moved to the centre of the stage. There she stood firm-footed, statuesque, draped in red, and began to mime the overthrow of the old order and the coming of the new : the brotherhood of man. And as the people all stood up, singing fervently

the words of their hymn, they seemed like a revival of the antique chorus commenting on the heroic gestures of the central figure on the stage.

When the dancer had mimed the first stanza the singing audience saw Irma come from a corner of the stage leading by the hand a little child, who was followed by another and another —a hundred little children in red tunics, each with the right hand held high clasping fraternally the left hand of the one before, moving against the blue curtains, forming a vivid, living frieze, and then circling the vast stage, and surrounding, with childish arms outstretched towards the light, the noble, undaunted, and radiant figure of their great teacher.

CHAPTER XIII

Following her triumphant appearance at the free gala performance in the Bolshoi Theatre, Isadora began to work with her new pupils. The atmosphere of the studio, however, was more Arctic than Hellenic. And as the month of November, following its natural course, was not likely to turn any warmer, the children's lessons were stopped. They were told not to return to the school until such time as fuel could be obtained in sufficient quantities to keep the enormous room properly and continuously heated. As the school was a government one, and newly founded, it seemed to take days before the request for wood went circulating from one bureau to another, and finally brought momentary tangible results. Had there been money in the coffers of the school, they might have gone out and bought enough wood to tide them over. Yet even that solution would have been difficult. For at the time private trading was not allowed. The famous New Economic Policy of Lenin was not yet promulgated.

Not long afterwards, however, this new policy came into force, changing the face of Russia in general and of the school in particular. Isadora's grand dream of a great free school supported by a wise and benevolent government, slowly began to disintegrate. For although the school in the Balachova palace was formally and officially opened on the third of December, 1921, and bore the proud name of the " Isadora Duncan State School," that name and the building with its spacious, unheated rooms were about the only things that the government did give freely and without stint to further the scheme for which Isadora Duncan came to Russia.

It was the sympathetic Lunatcharsky himself who came to tell the idealistic dancer of the government's change of mind. They could not go on supporting the school. They were going through a serious financial crisis. But now, as shops were to be allowed to open and do business ; as theatres would be permitted to charge for their amusements, it would also be possible for Comrade Duncan to give performances before paying audiences. In that way she ought to be able to go on for the time being with the school. Later, perhaps, in more settled times, the government would help in every way they could. He would always, no matter what

happened, watch over the school with a friendly interest.

So Isadora, after about six months' stay in Russia, was faced by the following two courses to take : either she could tell the responsible authorities that they had deliberately fooled her in asking her, at the cost of the loss of so much prestige in the European world, to come and open a school which they knew that they could not or would not support : therefore all she could now do was return to her commercial career in England, France, and America. Or she could stay in Moscow and fight to keep alive this newly founded school where forty bright and appealing children were beginning to enjoy their lessons. Isadora, without any hesitation, adopted the second course. She would dance all over Russia and the waste of Siberia, if that were necessary to keep alive the school that her faith had started in the midst of cold, hunger, and a new world in the making.

Thus it came about that before the end of 1921, Isadora Duncan was giving paying performances. These were given in the Zimin Theatre, which, though considerably larger than the Bolshoi, was always packed on each of the three evenings by an enthusiastic audience of true dance-lovers. Ah, if only the wildly applauding people of these audiences had something to say about giving this

great artist all the financial aid and moral support she needed for the foundation and the continued upkeep of her school !

At the first of these dance evenings she repeated her Tchaikowsky programme of the seventh of November gala. Her second programme was danced to the music of Wagner and Brahms. The *Suite of Waltzes* by the latter composer brought forth endless applause that forced her to repeat them. For the third evening she gave her Tchaikowsky dances again and ended as usual with the *Internationale*, which she now danced alone, with even more profound power. With the money from these performances she bought wood and foodstuffs for her little pensioners. And for Christmas day she bought a fir tree, which was set up in the hall. There was no money to buy the usual presents, the glittering tinsel ribbons or the shining, vari-coloured and fragile globes, but the delighted pupils, with deft fingers cut and folded and twisted coloured papers into all sorts of quaint shapes, and with these they decked out the dark green branches. The sight of these genuinely and simply happy children dancing in joy about their first Christmas tree really repaid Isadora for some of her pain, and helped in a measure to sweeten the bitterness of her disappointment.

The day following Christmas, Mrs. Litvinoff,

the wife of the Assistant to the Commissar for Foreign Affairs, came to see Isadora and begged her to dance that same evening for an audience of working people. It was some special occasion, some congress or other to be attended only by workers and peasants. Lunatcharsky was to speak, and Kharakhan and other leaders would be there also. Although Isadora well knew that such a performance would not feed any of her children, by even so much as a slice of black bread, she finally consented to give a free performance for these workers and peasants.

Next day she received a letter from Mrs. Litvinoff which, with its naïve desire to repay the artist, in some fashion, touched Isadora deeply. By the simpleness of the gesture she again felt repaid for all the weariness and the pain. It is interesting to read this letter which shows the emotional effect that the dancer's interpretation of the *Marche Slave* had on some Russians. We say some Russians, for later an incident happened which showed that the G.P.U. did not share in the general appreciation of the dancer's revolutionary treatment of this well-known musical work.

Mrs. Litvinoff's letter is dated December twenty-sixth, 1921, from 14 Sofiskaya Nabrejdnia:

" Dearest, Most Glorious Creature !

" Your Slavonic March was something no one can ever forget ! Seeing you I lived a hundred years of agony and slavery, but came out into the sunlight at last. But I am still trembling——

" I long so much to see you, just for one moment, to-night, but my husband went back to work and they told me I might get my *shuba* torn off me[1] if I went out alone in the streets.

" Kharakhan, who was also there, stood with the tears running down his cheeks.

" I have never even dreamt of such a human, living relation between artist and audience. Now you have really given the Moscow proletariat something for their very own. It was a lovely public—all soldiers and women with handkerchiefs on their heads.

" I am thinking, desperately, is there nothing of myself I can give you. I know you wouldn't refuse. The only thing I can think of is this —I am rather good at decoration. Don't you want me to embroider you something, or make you some curtains, or use me in some way ? *Je vous implore !* I can't do fine needlework or the usual sort of embroidery, but I can get you some nice, bold, naïve effects—only tell me something you would like ! I have made all the curtains for

[1] The streets of Moscow at that epoch were infested with robbers who were known to strip their victims naked.

my nursery out of white butter-muslin with *appliqué* animals and birds. Perhaps you would like some for your babies? The effect is very good.

" *Dosvidanya moya bezkonetchno krasivaya.*[1]

" SIGDA VASHA, IVY LITVINOFF."

[1] Good-bye, my infinitely beautiful one.

CHAPTER XIV

One evening in December, Essenine brought his friend Mariengoff to see Isadora. They were ushered into her own room. Seeing the surprised looks of the visitors as they examined the place, she said, according to Mariengoff:

" ' *C'est Balachoff . . . pholo chambre pholo . . . Isadora fichus, chales, acheter . . . mnogo, mnogo ruska chales.*' " (" ' It's Balachova's . . . awful room, awful . . . Isadora bought fichus and shawls . . . lots and lots of Russian shawls.' ")

On the table beside her bed stood, among other photos, one of Gordon Craig. This seemed to attract the eye of Essenine. He lifted the photo from the table and looked at it closely. Mariengoff tells of the conversation and what followed:

" ' Your *mouge*? '

" ' What does he mean, *mouge*? '

" ' Husband, spouse.'

" Isadora in half-French, half-Russian: ' Yes, husband. Craig. . . . Wrote and worked all the time. Craig was a genius.'

" Essenine, with his forefinger on his chest: ' I also am a genius. Essenine is a genius.' And so

saying he slipped the photograph under a pile of old papers and pieces of music. Then he said to it : ' Adieu ! '

" Isadora, enchanted, repeated the word ' Adieu ! ' and made a gesture of leave-taking.

" ' Now, Isadora, dance ! ' said Essenine. ' Dance for us ! '

" He felt like Herod demanding the dance from Salome.

" ' All right, I will dance for you.'

" Isadora put on the coat and cap of Essenine. . . . A sensual music that was unknown to us, a troubling music. . . . The apache was Isadora Duncan ; the woman was her scarf. A terrible and marvellous dance. The narrow and pink body of the scarf was twisted between her hands ; with her nervous fingers she strangled it, and the round silken head fell tragically. Isadora ended her dance by throwing the corpse of her imaginary partner on the carpet.

" Later Essenine became her master. Like a dog she kissed the hand that he raised to strike her, and his eyes, in which burned more often hate than love. And yet he was only the partner. Like the bit of pink stuff, a partner tragic and without a will. She danced. . . . It was she who led the dance.

" Essenine gave to his friend a music-box, a child's plaything.

" ' Turn the handle, Michel. I'm going to dance.'

" Michel turned the handle, and the box played *Barina*.

" Essenine took off his patent leather shoes, and with bare feet he gambolled on the carpet. With loving eyes Isadora watched him, saying : ' How Russian ! How Russian ! '

" Glasses overflowing with champagne were passed around. Essenine quickened his dance.

" ' *Metchatelno !* " (' Wonderful ') said Isadora.

" Essenine stopped. On his pale forehead ran great drops of cold sweat. His eyes were also cold, big, almost colourless.

" ' Isadora ! Cigarette ! '

" She handed Essenine a cigarette.

" ' Champagne ! '

" She gave it to him.

" Essenine with one gulp emptied the glass, then a second one.

" Isadora put her arms about his neck, her tender arms, a little too soft. She murmured : ' *Essenine krepkie, otchen krepkie !* ' (' Essenine is strong, very strong ! ') "

When the visits of the poet became more frequent, Isadora began to feel that her vocabulary was not adequate to the high occasion. She could not go on for ever telling the blond young man that he was " *Krepkie*," or " *Anguel*," or, with

much more truth, "*Tchort.*" Therefore she engaged the lady who taught English to the children of the school to come and give her a daily lesson in the difficult Russian language.

This good woman was in the ecstasy of excitement at the idea of having the great Isadora as a pupil. She dressed herself up specially for the occasion, and at the hour appointed for the first lesson, she appeared in the studio looking as if she had stepped out of a colour-print of the late 19th century—green velvet dress of a cut modish fifty years ago, a little ermine muff, and a quaintly plumed hat. She laid her muff down on the table very primly, took off her gloves, and being a practised exponent of the Berlitz system, she started at once.

"*Eta sto takoe?*" she asked, holding up a pencil lightly held between her forefinger and thumb.

"*Eta carandache,*" she replied, answering automatically her own question.

With a strong American accent that always seemed to come to the fore richly when Isadora spoke a foreign language, she repeated the teacher's affirmation that what she held in her hand was a pencil.

"*Ka koe carandache?*" asked the teacher, enunciating each syllable, and then answering in the same tone and chopped style :

" *Eta krasnoe carandache.*"

Over and over again, beyond the point of any human endurance, the pupil and the primly serious teacher bandied these strange words about. At the end of the first day's lesson, Isadora knew how to say, in Russian :

" What is this ? "

" This is a pencil."

" What kind of pencil ? "

" This is a red pencil."

Empty fare for the courting of a poet !

The next day when the lady came, hands in the little muff and a faint odour of lavender and patchouli emanating from her well-preserved green velvet, and began to review the lesson of the previous day :

" *Eta sto takoe ?* "

Isadora interrupted her to say : " Yes, that's very amusing. I'm sure the children must enjoy that sort of lesson. But I think you'd better teach me what I ought to say to a beautiful young man when I want to kiss him . . . and things like that."

The muffed lady was shocked. Horrified. Overthrow the rules of the Berlitz system ? To teach that kind of language ? She did not feel equal to the task and withdrew from the unashamed dancer to devote herself to the teaching of little children whose thoughts never dwelt on kissing . . . and things like that.

From that time on Isadora's instruction in the Russian language took the form of phrases which she would write down in English, and which various members of the household would then laboriously translate for her. There has been preserved in the School in Moscow a page torn out of a note-book, on which is written in her large, distinctive caligraphy :

" My last love." This is followed by the Russian translation printed out in capitals : " *Moy poslednya lubov.*"

" I worship the ground you walk on——!!!——"

" *Ya gotova chelovat cledi tvoik nog——!!!——*"

Then follow two other phrases in Russian, printed in capitals by the translator of the first two.

" *Ya tebya ne zaboudou, e boudou idat! a tue?* "

" *Tue doljen znat chto kogda tue vernetchcya—tue Mojesch voiti v eto dom takje Chverenno, kak vhodil, vchera e voschel segodnya.*"

(" I won't forget you, and I will await you. And you ? "

" You must know that when you return you can come into this house as though it were your own, as you went out yesterday, and as you came in to-day.")

It is to be supposed that these last two capitalised phrases were not so much what Isadora said, as what the translator thought she wanted to say.

And so Isadora's wanderings through the tangled intricacies of the Russian language began. They were aided later by the poet himself. But it is to be feared that the phrases he taught Isadora were not always from the " well of Russian undefiled."

CHAPTER XV

When the clannish Imaginist group saw that one of their number, the blond and beloved Sergei, was becoming entangled with a Woman, a very Eve and Lilith rolled in one, they began to seek out means and devise ways of breaking up the affair. It was not really because they thought that Isadora Duncan was a bad influence for the poet, or even because she was a woman. It was more because they were a little group jealous of their close association and the freedom of their members. They also had a publishing business and a shop, and they felt that if one went out of the group another would surely follow sooner or later, and Poetry and Business would naturally suffer. The little group had to be kept intact.

A miraculous chance for saving Essenine from himself and the Woman presented itself about the end of December. A good friend of the group who was going on a mission down to Persia consented to take Sergei with him on the long journey. The other poets laid their plans and decided not to broach the subject to Essenine until he was in the station. Then as a sort of dare-devil joke they

would ask him to make the journey to Persia.

On the day the special train was to leave, Essenine arrived at the station very late, to say good-bye to the mutual friend. He came just a second before the train pulled out. He was hoisted aboard into the arms of the departing friend as the train chugged off, and the other poets stood on the platform a long time to see that he did not jump off and walk back along the tracks to Moscow.

Mariengoff and the other members of the band were overjoyed at the success of their scheme for getting their comrade safely on the train, en route for adventures worthy of a poet, away from the Woman, away from the Deadly One. But within a few days, from Rostov-on-the-Don, a two days' journey from the capital, there came the postcard :

" Devil take you for having put me in such a situation . . . The private car I was to meet here has already left for Persia. Rostov is awful. My love to Isadora and Irma. I think that the air must be clearer about them now that I'm gone. And they have surely already forgotten me. Out of sight out of mind. But we won't weep over that. Idiot that you are, Toly. And I'm not much cleverer for having listened to you.

" SERGEI."

The following day Essenine was back again in Moscow, and at the beginning of the year 1922, he was installed in the grand apartment at twenty Pretchistenka, thereby giving his friend Mariengoff to ponder on the truth of the other poet's phrase :

" *The best laid schemes of mice and men*
Gang aft agley "

or its Russian equivalent. For these young poets were not very strong on other literatures than their own.

Isadora's house was always filled with a motley crew of Russian Bohemians—Imaginist poets, artists, sculptors like Konienkoff, musicians, decorators, etc. These were livened by a sprinkling of Americans, mostly journalists like Bessie Beatty, Ernestine Evans, Walter Duranty, and a few members of the American Relief Association stationed at Moscow. Essenine always seemed to be hurrying off somewhere to some mysterious rendezvous for which he feared he might be late. Because of this mad habit, Isadora made him a present of a beautiful, thin, gold watch. She thought that with the exact time in his waistcoat pocket he would not always be jumping up and running off to no one knew where.

Says Mariengoff: "Konienkoff divides humanity into two categories; the men with watches and the men without watches. If, speaking of someone, he said: 'He has a watch,' we knew then that if he were a painter, it was useless to discuss his talent. He simply had none. And here by a bizarre play of circumstances, 'a man without a watch' found himself suddenly the possessor of a gold watch. He was very proud of it and, before the gaze of each newcomer, he found the means of taking it out of his pocket to consult the time at least twice.

"And yet this watch did not play the rôle it was meant to play. Essenine, as before, continued to jump up from the Empire armchairs to run off to non-existent rendezvous.

"Often he came to our house with a little packet in his hand. On these days his face was serious, resolute. He said: "This time it's definite. I said to her: 'Isadora, good-bye' . . .

"In his little packet Essenine carried two shirts, a pair of drawers, a pair of socks—all he had. We smiled.

"Two hours later the porter from Pretchistenka came with a letter.

"Essenine wrote a reply, laconic and definite. An hour after came Mr. Schneider, Isadora's secretary.

"At last, in the evening, she herself appeared.

Her lips were pursed, and her blue eyes still shone with tears. She sat down beside his seat and put her arms about his legs, her hair falling about his knees.

" ' Anguel ! '

" Essenine pushed her away brutally with his foot.

" ' Go to Hell,' he said, using a foul word.

" Then, Isadora smiling still more tenderly, said very softly : ' Sergei Alexandrovitch, *lublu tebia.*' (I love you.)

" And always this ended in the same fashion : Essenine took up his little bundle and went away.

" He was a wayward, wilful little child, and she was a mother passionately enough in love with him to overlook and forgive all the vulgar curses and the peasant blows. And so scenes of love and felicity were usually followed by drunken scenes and truancies from Pretchistenka."

This went on for a while until February, when Isadora had an offer from an impresario in Leningrad to go and give some performances there. She asked Sergei Alexandrovitch if he would care to come there with her. He, being in one of his idyllic moments, gladly accepted the invitation, and together they left for the north.

Before they left, however, for Petrograd, the " Man with a Watch " brusquely became a

" Man Without a Watch " again. One night, after his friends had teased him unmercifully about his " *Cadeau de Fiançailles*," the aristocratic gold watch, he came to Isadora's room and handed it back to her. She refused to accept it. She told him that if he really loved her he must keep the watch in spite of his silly friends and their quaint Bohemian ideas. Not only that, but he must also put her picture in the case. She gave him one of her passport snapshots.

" Not watch. Isadora. Isadora's picture ! "

He was naïvely pleased with the idea and put the watch with the picture back again in his pocket. A few days later in a paroxysm of rage at something or other that had not pleased him he hurled the watch to the other side of the room with the concentrated force of a trained discus-thrower. When he had ragingly left the room, Isadora went slowly over to the corner and looked ruefully at the fragments of shattered glass and the smashed case with its scattered, silent works. And from the midst of the delicate débris she picked up her own smiling image.

Arriving in Petrograd, they went to the Hôtel D'Angleterre, where Isadora, as was her custom, engaged the best suite in the house. (It was in the bedroom of this suite that the poet, a few years later, committed suicide.) And once settled, there came, as usual, various friends to call on her

to pay their respects. Among the callers were some rich Americans who had met Isadora on one of her tours in America. On entering the room, they divested themselves of their heavy fur coats. One of the group, without paying much attention, threw his garment carelessly on a chair, from where it slid on the floor. After a while the room was filled with a peculiar smell of something burning. They all looked about the place but saw nothing unusual ; and so went on talking. The smell continued, and even grew more pronounced, but no one in the room paid any more attention to it until the guests rose to go. Then it was discovered that the coat that had slipped from the chair had fallen over the little electric stove that Isadora had bought to try and add to the heat of the room. This little apparatus had slowly but methodically burned a great hole in the beautiful new American fur coat.

Said Isadora : " Maeterlinck was right, you see. Things do have souls. This is probably a good communist stove protesting in its fashion against the representatives of capitalist America ! "

The wine cellars of the Hôtel D'Angleterre were famous, and stocked with all the best pre-war vintages in uncountable pints, quarts, and magnums. Essenine soon discovered this fact ; and soon discovered also that travelling with Isadora gave him a sort of *cachet*. He had a free

hand about ordering what he wanted when he wanted it. The result was that Isadora often came home from her performances to find him before a varied collection of empty wine bottles. And more than once during their stay at the Angleterre he had to be forcibly carried back to his room by the valets, who found him wandering completely naked and riotous about the halls of the hotel.

It was during her series of performances at this time in Petrograd that there occurred an incident which made a profound impression on Isadora. Of all the stories that she afterwards told to her friends in France, in recounting her life and adventures in Russia, this was the one she loved most to tell. It has already been retold, often badly and without point, by various journalists, including the author of the *Intimate Portrait of Isadora Duncan.*

The second performance given in Petrograd was specially reserved for the sailors of the naval base. Most of the 3,000 of them that packed the theatre were veterans of the revolution of 1917–18 : sailors from the cruiser *Aurora* and other boats that had led in the revolt.

After Isadora had danced her first number on the programme the lights went out. The theatre was plunged into a darkness that all the flickering

matches lit by the sailors could never lighten. As on all such occasions, there was much shuffling of feet, laughter, calls across the audience, and whistling. Finally, after a while, with the audience growing more and more noisy, someone behind the stage managed to find a lantern with a candle in it. This they brought on the stage to where Isadora stood, a little nervous as to the outcome of her matinée. Taking the lantern, she held it up over her head, and coming forward to the edge of the stage she asked the sailors if they wouldn't like to sing some of their songs for her. Someone on the stage translated her request into Russian.

A second's silence. Then from out of the great dark cavern before her Isadora heard a solo voice, rich, vibrant, sure, singing the opening lines of the old revolutionary song, the *Varshavianka.*

> " *The enemy winds whistle shrill about us,*
> *Dark forces seek to press us down . . .*"

The audience, encouraged by the obscurity and, in any case, used to mass singing, joined in after the leader. The volume of deep warm tones welled up out of the darkness and poured over the stage where Isadora stood silent and alone. She who loved music more than all else in the world, was thrilled to her heart's core : more

thrilled even than she had been on first hearing the Aria of Bach or the Berlin Philharmonic under Nikisch playing the *Seventh Symphony* of Beethoven. For this mass music welling up from these unseen, simple men was more movingly human, more gloriously elemental than any instrumental music had ever been.

One after another, they sang all their revolutionary songs, now grave and rich in full-throated male tones, now martial and quick with invisible red banners floating in the air and invisible, soundless feet that marched in cadence off to some heroic struggle. They sang the endless, sorrow-filled verses of the *Funeral March for the Heroes of the Revolution*, their unwearied voices rising and falling in the darkness. And on the stage, still immobile, her unflinching arm still holding high the lantern with its flickering candle, Isadora stood with the tears coursing down her cheeks.

When the lights finally came on after an hour of this impromptu concert, Isadora spoke to the sailors and said : " When masses sing it is always beautiful. But I have never heard music so rare, so simply beautiful. I shall never forget what I have heard to-night."

CHAPTER XVI

The days went by, one like another, in March, after Isadora had returned to Moscow from Petrograd. The school, which Irma had directed in her absence, followed its natural course, and the private affairs of its founder followed theirs. Essenine came and went as before, and Isadora received visits from her friends, from the journalists, the members of the A.R.A.,[1] and others.

One evening, with no boisterous or bibulous Imaginists about her and no sign of any other callers, she suggested to the secretary of the school that they ought to play with the ouija board. The board was brought, and they settled down to an evening of laborious spelling out of "messages." When their fingertips were placed lightly on the pointer, it began to dash and scuffle about the board ; and then it slid successively to the letters Д.О.Р.А. and stopped.

"What was that?" asked Isadora of her partner.

"A part of your name," he replied. "Dora."

Isadora went white. She explained to the young man that Dora was the name of her mother, who

[1] American Relief Association.

was ill at Raymond's place in Paris. There was no sleep for Isadora that night ; her agitated mind was peopled with forebodings. She saw visions, and re-lived again all the hours she had spent in the company of the wonderful human being who was her mother. In the morning they brought to her room a telegram from Paris. She glanced at it with red and swollen eyes. But the words the eyes saw only told the brain what her heart already knew : Dora Gray Duncan had died at her son's residence in Paris on April twelfth, 1922.

From that moment, Isadora became more and more restless in Moscow. She felt that she must leave Russia for a while. This was necessary for two reasons : her health and her school's finances. She felt that the only way of getting money in large enough quantities was to tour in the outside world, and, if possible, take with her a group of the best pupils to show the work she was accomplishing. With this end in view she telegraphed an impresario in New York asking if he would arrange a tour in the United States for her. He telegraphed back his willingness to arrange such a tour, but suggested that nothing much could be done before the autumn season.

So the days of April passed, and the first of May arrived. Isadora on that fête day watched the working people parade the streets, singing

their songs of labour and revolt, their scarlet and gold banners flying. She had never seen such a demonstration. Men and women and young people, conscious of their power and their hardly won freedom, marched in the streets of the city from dawn until sundown. Isadora was so impressed that she wrote of what she had seen in the following words :

" The first of May in Moscow was a wonderful sight. The streets were like crimson roses. Thousands of men, women, and children, with red handkerchiefs about their heads and red flags in their hands, swept by singing the *Internationale*. All these people had lived for four years on black bread and grey rice, but I fancy that that first of May meant more joy to them than every year of good feeding under the reign of the Czar. It was a great sight, those crowds, joyous and confident, singing :

" ' *The Earth shall rise from its foundation,*
We have been naught, we shall be all ! '

" As I looked and listened I wished with all my heart that this song could be radioed around the whole earth."

The day after the May Festival " Isadora Duncan, Artiste, and Sergei Alexandrovitch Essenine, Littérateur," to quote the official certificate, were married in the office of the

Moscow Registry of Civil Statistics. To all who knew the dancer and her ideas about marriage, this news item, which was cabled to the outside world, came as a shock. But if they could have been told what a simple unbinding ceremony it was—the merest formality ! She abdicated none of her ideas about marriage.

Isadora wanted to take Essenine out of Russia : first, because he was a very sick man, in need of the examination and care of a specialist ; second, because he was a poet who required, so she thought, new horizons. (Ah, if she had only known how unwise it was to uproot this *moujik* from his soil—the soil he wept over and kissed after he returned from his wanderings in the Occidental world !)

Isadora wanted to take Essenine out of Russia. She wanted to show him all that Europe had of beauty, and all that America had of wonder. But while she knew she could travel in Germany, France, and Italy with her blond poet, occupying the best suites in the Adlons and Ritzes, receiving the élite of the intellectual world without anyone ever being so impertinent as to question the existence or the non-existence of a marriage certificate, she also knew from past experience that life was less ideally simple in American states, and hotel keepers more interfering. She remembered quite well the barbaric

hounding of another great Russian, Maxim Gorky. He had dared, the poor, unwitting genius, to visit New York, accompanied by a female companion, who was bound to him only by love and not by any respectable band of gold placed on the third finger of her left hand with "benefit of clergy."

So for the sake of a peaceful and fruitful tour in the Land of Liberty (Let Freedom Ring !) Isadora Duncan went through the formality of a Soviet marriage and signed her name to the official papers as Isadora Essenine-Duncan.

The next step for the journey towards other horizons was to get passports and visas. It was at this moment that Isadora discovered that the passport which she had brought with her on her entry into Russia, and which she had been forced to deliver to a Narkomindel official in Moscow, was nowhere to be found. Somewhere, buried under some mass of dusty papers in some obscure bureau of the Foreign Office, or somewhere in the hands of another person travelling outside Russia, was the passport issued by the State Department of the United States of America to Miss Isadora Duncan. And all the satisfaction she could obtain after hours of talking, discussing, and protesting, was a piece of paper that would enable her to pass out of Russia without being molested by any officious servant of the Tcheka.

As to the mechanical means of leaving the

country, she had decided that the memorable honeymoon trip should be made by air. It did not put her off to be told that since the air service had been started between Moscow and Germany, there had never been any private passengers, or that the price would be staggering —at least a thousand gold roubles ! She was going, she said, if it was the last act of her life.

" Apropos," said her friends, " you had better make a will before you embark on this adventure."

" Nonsense ! " she said, " I've never made a will in my life."

But looking at her new husband, she changed her mind. Taking up from the table a small penny note-book, from which most of the pages had been torn, she hurriedly wrote in pencil the following text, which covers four of its little pages :

" This is my last will and testament. In case of my death I leave my entire properties and effects to my husband, Sergei Essenine. In case of our *simultaneous* death then such properties to go to my Brother, Augustin Duncan.

" Written in clear conscience.

" Isadora Essenine-Duncan

" Witnessed by

" I. I. Schneider

" Irma Duncan

" May Ninth, 1922, Moscow."

Next morning the adventurous couple motored from 20 Pretchistenka to the Trotsky flying-field, where the huge Fokker plane was awaiting them. Schneider, the Secretary of the School, wrote down for a journal he was representing the following account :

" The weather was sharp and cold. There were clouds, and it began to rain. But at the moment of departure the sun shone. On the flying-field were representatives of Narkomindel and various foreign journals. Two big trunks were stowed away, and the first private passengers to fly from Moscow to Berlin climbed into their cabin. She was dressed in a travelling suit which had been specially tailored for the occasion, but Essenine was obliged to put on flying kit lent by the company.

" Punctually at nine the propellers turned, and the doors were closed. Isadora looked at the children of her school from the cabin window and waved her hand in farewell to them. The plane glided along the ground. Suddenly the door opened again. A scared, white face appeared with a cry for the lunch basket. Essenine waved his arm wildly. Somebody ran to catch up with them and managed to hand in the basket just as the plane left the ground. In a minute it was a small speck in the distance, and they were gone."

THE AMERICAN TOUR 1922-1923

CHAPTER XVII

On May eleventh Isadora and her poet went straight from the Templehof flying-field in Berlin to the Hotel Adlon. There they celebrated, she her return and he his introduction to the civilised life of luxury, elegance, and expensive comfort. The various correspondents of American and English newspapers flocked to the hotel to interview the newly married couple, and soon the air of the bridal suite became poisonous with the fumes from the repeated magnesium flashes.

Berlin since the early days of the Russian Revolution had become the great European centre for the Slavic hordes which had fled their disorganised country. The town contained a veritable Russian salad of nobles—more or less authentic—despoiled merchants, rancorous and idle White Guards, adventurers, intellectuals, writers, artists, musicians, actors. Of this unsettled and disoriented population, some of whose members did humble and honest labour, while others spent their working hours in pretentious dishonesty, not all were opposed to the régime that had been set up in their unhappy country.

In a villa near the city lived the greatest Russian writer, an intimate friend of Lenin, Maxim Gorky. The poet Koussikoff, an old companion of Essenine's, went about among his expatriated compatriots still carrying the guitar on which he could only strum a few elemental chords. The novelist Ilya Ehrenbourg and the poet Bielly were also prominent literary figures in the Russian colony.

Many young artists were there also, among them Polia Chentoff and Pavlic Tchilicheff, who were later to have brilliant futures in the art world of Paris. The stranded actors and musicians had formed a company called *The Blue Bird*, which gave nightly performances after the manner of Balieff's *Bat*. And there were publishing houses that turned out only Russian literature, and daily papers in the Russian language.

It did not take Essenine long to find his bearings in this new Russian city, and to get in touch with his compatriots. Soon after his arrival, he was not only associating with the great Gorky and the lesser Koussikoff, but was giving public readings of his poems in a manner that thrilled even the White Guards who happened to attend the soirée. His poems had such a success that arrangements were made to bring out a volume of them in Berlin. Through Isadora, he later entered into negotiations with a Belgian poet concerning a proposed selection of his lyrics to

be translated into French and published, at Isadora's expense, by a Russian publisher established in Paris. The volume was to be titled, appropriately enough, *Les Confessions d'un Voyou*—" *The Confessions of a Roughneck.*"

(What a rare lyric confession this roughneck could have made of that day in Berlin when, coming into the hotel room and finding his wife weeping over an album containing portraits of her unforgettable Deirdre and Patrick, he ruthlessly tore it from her and, throwing it into the fire, cried in a drunken rage, as he held her back from saving her precious memorial : " You spend too much time thinking of these —— children ! ")

Maxim Gorky has written of these days in Berlin in a book of essays devoted to various Russian writers. In the essay devoted to Essenine he tells of his meeting with him and discusses his work. He considers him the greatest poet of the new generation and looks with disfavour on his marriage to the internationally famous artist. The dancer, according to him, could never by any effort of her imagination understand the all-too-Russian poetry of her super-slavic husband ! Nor did her art find much favour with Gorky, beauty being in the eye of the beholder. He remarks that when she danced for him and his friends one night, she impressed him as a woman trying to keep warm ! . . .

The German pace being too much for the Essenines, they went down to the fashionable watering-place, Wiesbaden. From there the poet wrote to his friend, the Secretary of the Duncan School in Moscow.

" Wiesbaden,
" *21 June, 1922.*

" DEAR I. I.,

" Greetings to you and kisses. Forgive me for not having written to you for so long. The Berlin atmosphere has shaken me to pieces. At present, after a nervous breakdown, I can hardly move my leg. Now I am taking a cure at Wiesbaden. I have stopped drinking and have begun to work. If Isadora were not so capricious and would make it possible for me to sit quietly somewhere, I could earn a lot of money. So far I have only received 100,000 and something marks, but I have in prospect about 400,000.[1]

" Isadora's business is in an awful state. In Berlin the lawyer sold her house and paid her only 90,000 marks ! The same thing may also happen in Paris. Her property—library and furniture—have all been appropriated and carried off in all directions. Her money from the bank has been stopped. Now she has sent one

[1] Inflation marks.

of her intimate friends down there in a hurry. The famous Paul-Boncour not only did not help her in any way but even refused his signature for a visa to Paris. This is the state of her business. . . . But she acts as though nothing has happened, jumps into the automobile to go to Lubeck, or to Leipzig, to Frankfurt, or to Weimar. I follow in silent resignation because, after each protest I make, hysterics.

" Germany ? Of this we shall speak later when we meet. But life is not here except with us. Here one really finds the slow, sad descent of which Spengler wrote. Let us be Asiatics. Let us smell evilly. Let us shamelessly scratch our backsides in front of everyone. But we don't stink like corpses, as they stink, inside. No kind of revolution can be possible here. Everything has come to an *impasse*. Only an attack from such barbarians as we can save and rebuild them. It is necessary—a march on Europe. . . . But serious thoughts in this letter are not becoming me. I come back to business.

" For God's sake search for my sister through our bookshop (leave a note for her) and help her to get money with the enclosed cheque through the A.R.A. She must surely be very hard up. The cheque for Irma is only a trial. When we know that you have received this, Isadora will send as much as is necessary. If my

sister is not in Moscow, send her a letter through Mariengoff. Then if you go to London, call her to you and give her an exact address where she can receive money, without which she will die.

" Give my greetings and all my feelings of love to Mariengoff. I have sent him two letters which for some reason he has not answered. About our Russian friends in Berlin I could tell you wonderful things : especially about a denunciation to the French Police which made it impossible for me to get to Paris. About all this later, for I must take care of my nerves now. When you are leaving, take all my books from Mariengoff with you and all material that has been written about me during my absence.

" I shake your hand, hoping to see you soon.

Your loving ESSENINE.

" To Irma my best regards. Isadora married me for the second time and is now not any more Duncan—Essenine, yes, just Essenine."

From Wiesbaden the couple continued their wanderings to Ostend, and after a while spent there, they went to Brussels en route to Paris by air. From the Belgian capital the poet wrote again to the Secretary, and, as before, his preoccupation seemed to be with the financial situation of his sister.

" Bruxelles,
" Hotel Metropole,
" *13 July, 1922.*

" DEAR I. I.,

" I have written you in detail in three long letters about all the events and travels. Did they reach you ? If you could see me now you would probably not believe your eyes. Almost a month now since I've taken a drink. On account of a heavy neuritis and neurasthenia I made a promise not to drink until October, and now they are over.

" Isadora is quite worried about you all. All means of sending money that seemed possible in Moscow have turned out to be impossible here. Saturday, the fifteenth of July, we fly to Paris. From there, through the A.R.A., it will be easier. In one parcel that was sent through Krassine's Office, there were two cheques of ten pounds each —one for Irma and the other for my sister. Did you receive them? We did that to find out if it was possible to send you what is necessary that way.

" Dear, dear I. I., if the school comes to Europe it will create a furore. We await your arrival, impatiently. I await you specially, because Isadora knows devil a thing about practical affairs. It hurts me to see the crowd of bandits that surround her. When you come the air will clear up.

" I have a great favour to ask you ; for God's sake give some money to my sister when you leave. I have repeated this again and again in my other letters. If you haven't any, or your father or anyone else, then ask Mariengoff and Sashka. Find out how much she receives from the shop. That is my greatest wish, for she must study. It will be impossible to help her from America when we get there.

" Best wishes and thousands of greetings to Irma. Come quickly. We will celebrate. We shall telegraph you about your departure. You must all go to Berlin first, and from there you will be registered to Paris or Ostend. That's all. We shall talk more when we meet. Come ! Come ! Give money to my sister. Bring poems by Mariengoff, addresses and many, many books. Here it is devilishly boring.

" Lovingly yours,

" S. Essenine."

From Paris the dancer and her husband went down to Venice, and stayed there for a time in the most fashionable hotel of the ultra-fashionable Lido. When the season ended there, they returned to Paris to prepare for their American tour. They were to make this alone, having in the course of the summer received word from the school in Moscow that it was impossible to get

permission to take out the group of pupils, whom Isadora had planned to show in America.

On arriving back in Paris again, Isadora paid a visit to her house in the Rue de la Pompe. Isadora found that her Russian tenant had flown without paying the rent and had left the key under the front door-mat. But they had a house to live in until their sailing date arrived. And this was most welcome, for it meant that Isadora could use the large Salle Beethoven at the back of the house for the rehearsals she needed so badly. Since her performances in Petrograd, she had not danced in public, and had had no place in which to rehearse for the forthcoming and important American tour. The poet Franz Hellens, who at this period was working with his Russian wife on the French translations of Essenine's poems, tells of an evening spent at the Rue de la Pompe.

" I saw them almost every day, sometimes in Isadora's little house in the Rue de la Pompe or sometimes at the Hotel Crillon, where they had taken refuge from domestic difficulties. If Essenine in the Crillon acted like a man of the world, not a bit out of place in a sphere that was so little made for him, in the intimacy of the little house he seemed more in his element, more striking, more sympathetic. . . .

" I do not think there was ever a woman in the world that understood more maternally her rôle

of *inspiratrice* than did Isadora when she took Essenine to Europe, and in order to get him out of Russia proposed marriage to him. This was a sublime act, for it meant for her a sacrifice and the assurance of sorrow. She had no illusions about this, knowing that the period of tormented happiness would be short ; that she would live in a dramatic disequilibrium ; that sooner or later the wild boy she wanted to bring up would pull himself together and shake off, perhaps brutally, the sort of amorous tutelage which she couldn't stop herself from exercising over him. For Isadora passionately loved the poet. I saw that this love, even at its beginning, was already a sort of despair.

" I remember an evening when there appeared to me both the drama of these two existences and the true character of Essenine.

" I arrived when they were still at table and found them in a strange and sombre humour. They hardly spoke to me. They were clasped together like two young lovers, and there was nothing to show that they had quarrelled. A few moments later Isadora told me that their existence was poisoned by the servants ; that there had been that evening repugnant scenes which had quite upset her. As his wife showed herself to be more nervous than usual, seeming to lose the admirable coolness, the sense of measure, the

rhythm which was the foundation of her art and also her nature, and which acted so well ordinarily on the poet, Essenine took it into his head to get her drunk. There was no bad intention on his part ; quite the contrary. It was his own way of calming shaken nerves. He forced her wheedlingly, softly, lifting the glass himself to his wife's lips. As the effects of the drinking began to show themselves I read more clearly in the dancer's features the despair that she usually knew how to hide under a calm and smiling air.

" Suddenly Isadora pulled herself together and, making an effort, invited us to pass into the studio—an immense hall with a stage at one end and cushioned divans all along the walls. There she begged me to recite my version of " *Pougatscheff*," which I had just finished, the lines of which are personages, crowds, the wind, the earth, the trees. I did it much against my will, for I feared to spoil by my defective diction and my timidity the admirable poem which has an accent both harsh and soft. She could not have been very satisfied with my recitation, for immediately after she asked Essenine to say the same poem in Russian. How ashamed I was when I saw and heard ! What had I done with his poetry ? At one moment Essenine let himself go like a whirlwind, at the next he murmured like the morning breezes among the young leaves. It was like an instinctive

manifestation of the essential movements of his poetic temperament. Never have I seen poetry lived to such a degree by the poet. The recitation was a powerful résumé of his tastes; he sang them, he proclaimed them, he spat them out, he screamed them, he purred them with an animal grace and a force that gripped and seduced you in turn.

"That evening I understood that these two existences, notwithstanding their differences, could never separate without tragedy. . . ."

And so between poetry recitals, rehearsals, and the social round, the days sped by. At the end of September, armed with a French document obtained through the potent social influence of her old friend Cécile Sorel of the Comédie Francaise, and with the requisite consular visas, Isadora and her husband sailed for New York on board the S.S. *Paris*.

CHAPTER XVIII

On the first day of October, 1922, as the S.S. *Paris* steamed slowly up the bay of New York, past the Statue of Liberty, Isadora Duncan was informed by an immigration official that she would not be allowed to land. Neither would her husband or their secretary, Vladimir Vetluguin, be allowed to set foot in the country Isadora had told them so much about. The official was quite polite but not very informative. Yes, yes, the visas were in perfect order ; oh, yes, Miss Duncan was an American, born in America of American parents ; BUT . . .

There was apparently nothing to be done until the case had been reviewed by the higher authorities of the immigration service on Ellis Island. In the meantime, the boat having been docked at the French Line pier, Isadora was able to see her relatives and her manager and inform them of her plight. The gallant commandant of the *Paris*, Captain Mauras, went security for the party to the immigration officials and invited them to remain on board as his guests. In this way they were saved the humiliation of passing

the night in the immigrant quarters of Ellis Island.

As the visitors left the ship, they were met at the pier gates by a burly detective, who tapped the manager on the shoulder and said : " You there, you'll have to come with me. An' if you don't come peacefully, we'll have to use force ! "

In an office nearby, the protesting manager was stripped naked, and every pocket and seam of his garments was examined. They wanted no seditious literature nor Bolshevik plans for the overthrow of the American government carried into New York. These " Reds " were not to be trusted.

To Isadora, in the meantime, no reason was given for the detention. One of the army of reporters who came to interview her suggested that the authorities thought she and her husband had come specially to America to spread the dreaded plague of " Red " propaganda. To which Isadora replied :

" Nonsense ! We want to tell the American people about the poor starving children in Russia and not about the country's politics. Sergei is not a politician. He is a genius. He is a great poet. We have come to America with only one idea in mind—to tell of the Russian conscience and to work for the *rapprochement* of the two great countries. No politics, no propaganda. It is only in the field of art that we are working. We believe

that the soul of Russia and the soul of America are about to understand each other."

Then to the reporters with her sweetest smile : " There is just one thing that astonishes me. That is to hear that the American government has no sympathy with revolutions. I had always been taught that our great country was started by a revolution in which my great grandfather, General William Duncan, played a noble part."

Naturally the subject of the dancer's arrival with her new poet-husband and their detention by the immigration authorities filled the columns of all the newspapers. Some journalists even went so far as to accuse Isadora of having staged the affair so that her American tour would have a good publicity send-off ! Yet the dancer did not want for defenders. Many protesting editorials were written, and many letters appeared in the columns of the metropolitan papers. In the *New York Herald* there appeared the following letter from the pen of the well-known opera singer, Anna Fitziu :

" Isadora Duncan's Case
" Anna Fitziu Protests Against Her Ellis Island Experience

"To the *New York Herald* : Isadora Duncan at Ellis Island ! The gods may well laugh. Isadora

Duncan, to whom the school of Classical Dancing in America owes its foundation, put in the class with dangerous immigrants !

" Here is an American artist of the very first rank, a woman whose art is developed to a subtlety almost beyond appreciation, a dancer who puts into her performance not only the exquisite perfection of rhythm and poetry of movement but a vivid and restless imagination that is unsurpassed in the realm of the dance, put in a detention pen !

" All the trouble seems to have arisen from the simple fact that Miss Duncan has exercised the privilege of marrying whom she pleased, and that her husband happens to be a youthful Russian poet. All those who know Miss Duncan know that she is an artist little interested in social and economic problems, and her husband is an artist like her.

" When we Americans reach a point where we are willing to disown our own—for Miss Duncan is our own—when our own have contributed something priceless to our native art, it is surely time to protest. I do not believe we have reached that point, but as our immigration officials apparently do believe it, I hereby register my feeble protest.

" Anna Fitziu.

" New York, *October* 3."

On the morning of October second the detained passengers on the *Paris* were escorted by two guards to the customs office on the Cunard Line pier. There all their baggage was opened and thoroughly inspected by the chief officials. Every article was examined ; all wearing apparel being turned inside out and all pockets felt ; even the soiled linen did not escape poking and shaking. All written matter was microscopically peered at ; all printed matter in what seemed to be the Russian language—mostly books of poems and copies of Russian classics—was confiscated for further and more detailed examination. And sheet by sheet all the orchestral and piano music was turned over, explanations being demanded from the dancer as to the meaning of her marginal notes on several of the scores.

At the conclusion of the unhurried and unincriminating examination, the party, still accompanied by the guards, returned to the French Line pier, where they were met by the secretary. From there they were all taken in a taxi to the Barge Office and thence to Ellis Island. After waiting about, they were finally taken before the Board of Review. After a séance in the inquiry Chamber before the Commissioner of Immigration, Robert E. Tod, and his assistant, H. R. Landis, Isadora and her companions appeared smiling. To her manager and her lawyer, who

awaited outside, she cried : " Pronounced innocent—not guilty ! "

To the reporters who accompanied her on the cutter back to the city she said : " I feel as if I were acquitted of murder. They seemed to think that a year's residence in Moscow had made me a blood-thirsty criminal ready to throw bombs at the slightest provocation. Then they asked me silly questions, such as, ' Are you a classic dancer ? ' I told them I didn't know, because my dancing is quite personal. They wanted to know what I looked like when I danced ! How do I know ? I never saw myself dance.

" The board also asked me if I had spoken with any Austrian officers in Berlin when I arrived there from Russia by aeroplane. I had to disappoint them by telling them the truth. I've never spoken to an Austrian officer either in Berlin or elsewhere since my return from Russia. Among other absurd things they wanted to know what Sergei and I thought of the French Revolution !

" Before I set foot on Ellis Island I had absolutely no idea that the human mind could worry itself into figuring out all the questions that were rapidly fired at me to-day. I have never had anything to do with politics. All my time in Russia has been spent taking care of little orphans and teaching them my art. To say or even hint

that I am a Bolshevik is Rot ! Rot ! Rot ! "

At the Battery, where the boat landed, they were met by a host of friends, who escorted them to the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. With only four days between these wearing emotions and her first appearance before the American public after an absence of almost five years, Isadora had need of all the repose, comfort, and care that the famous hostelry could give her.

The final word on the grotesque situation was said next day in the *New York World* by the good-humoured Heywood Broun :

" Anybody but an immigration official would have known that Isadora Duncan is before and after everything else a dancer.

" We have no means of knowing what her political opinions may be and we can imagine nothing of less consequence. She is an artist of the first rank, who has revolutionised dancing not only in America but all over the world. She deserves a warm welcome from her own country instead of blundering boorishness."

CHAPTER XIX

On Saturday, the seventh of October, Isadora Duncan gave her first dance performance in New York before a crowded and enthusiastic house. Three thousand vociferous admirers filled Carnegie Hall with their welcoming applause ; outside stood hundreds of others waiting in the vain hope of obtaining even a foot of standing room.

The programme was the familiar Tchaikowsky one, with the *Sixth* (*Pathétique*) *Symphony* and the *Marche Slave*. As preludes to both parts of the programme the orchestra, under the vibrant direction of Nathan Franko, played several of the earlier pieces of Tchaikowsky, which the Russian composer had conducted at the dedication of Carnegie Hall in 1891. When the programme was ended, the audience stood cheering the dancer and seemed loth to leave the hall. Isadora came forward to speak. Among other things she said to her friendly audience :

" Why must I go to Moscow after illusions that don't exist, when you in America also need the dance for your children ? I know the American nervous child, for I was one myself. . . .

" Soon I hope to show you fifty Russian children dancing Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*. I can bring that to life in New York—make it more real than Broadway. . . . Why does not America give me a school ? It was the lack of response to this that made me accept the invitation from Moscow.

" America has all that Russia has not ! Russia has things that America has not. Why will America not reach out a hand to Russia, as I have given my hand ? "

A few days later, on the eleventh, Isadora gave another recital before a house as crowded and enthusiastic as the first. For this performance she interpreted several Wagnerian compositions, and in response to the final cheers and applause she danced her favourite Brahms waltz. As the audience still remained in the hall cheering and applauding, the dancer made her usual speech. She closed by paying tribute to her orchestral conductor, Mr. Franko, and likened him to the great Arthur Nikisch.

While other performances were being arranged in New York—the rush of musical events of the already arranged winter season making the fixing of dates rather difficult—the dancer went on to Boston to give two recitals in Symphony Hall. On these two recitals, or rather on the distorted newspaper accounts of them, Isadora Duncan's

American tour was wrecked. As usual, she made a speech to her audience. She felt that no performance was complete without at least a few words to her friends and admirers in the house. " As a dancer," she was in the habit of saying, laughingly, to her intimates who tried to dissuade her from speaking her mind after each recital, " as a dancer, I am really a great orator ! " And indeed she had the gift of speech in a remarkable measure. She was a perfect story-teller and had a felicity of expression and a sense of idiom, even in French, with a savour all its own. It is betraying no secret to say that her book, *My Life*, except for a few too intimate passages which she wrote in tears, was all spoken to stenographers.

In Boston, however, it was not so much what she said as what she did. Carried away by her speech and aggravated by the stolidity of the audience and the cold greyness of the hall, she cried at the end of her performance, waving her red silk scarf above her head :

" This is red ! So am I ! It is the colour of life and vigour. You were once wild here. Don't let them tame you ! "

Here several old ladies and gentlemen rose from their seats and hurried out. The young students from Harvard and the young men and women from the Boston art and music schools remained to cheer.

" Thank God the Boston critics don't like me. If they did, I should feel I was hopeless. They like my copies. I give you something from the heart. I bring you something real. . . .

" You must read Maxim Gorky. He has said that there are three kinds of people : the black, the grey, the red. The black people are like the former Kaiser or the ex-Czar—people who bring terror, who want to command. The red are those who rejoice in Freedom, in the untrammelled progress of the soul.

" The grey people are like those walls, like that hall. Look at these statues overhead. They are not real. Knock them down. They are not the statues of real Greek Gods. I could hardly dance here. Life is not real here. Mr. Franko was doing his best, but he could hardly play here. We are red people, Mr. Franko and I. . . ."

And as the curtain came down she waved her scarf again, while the majority of the audience cheered.

But the next day all over America appeared scare headlines screaming :

" RED DANCER SHOCKS BOSTON.
ISADORA'S SPEECH DRIVES MANY
FROM BOSTON HALL.
DUNCAN, IN FLAMING SCARF,
SAYS SHE'S RED,"

and more of the same. Under the pens of certain unscrupulous story writers the red scarf became the dancer's entire red tunic. She was pictured in graphic detail as having torn off the flimsy scarlet draperies, which she waved above her head as she delivered her speech in the nude. From the hall ran the Boston virgins of varying ages and the youthful Cabots and Lodges, veiling their faces and crying, " Horror ! "

The Mayor of Boston, an Irish politician by the name of Curley, issued a statement to the press saying that he had written to tell the Licensing Bureau that it would be inadvisable to grant Miss Duncan a license to appear in Boston again, " in view of the duty the city owes to the decent element."

" I beg to say," continued this historic document, " that this suspension, after the recent disgraceful performance by the dancer, will continue as long as I am mayor."

Isadora, however, was determined to have the last word. She could be as Irish as the Honourable Mr. Curley. To the reporters who gleefully came to see her at the Copley-Plaza before she left the city for Chicago, she said :

" If my Art is symbolic of any one thing, it is symbolic of the freedom of woman and her emancipation from the hide-bound conventions

that are the warp and woof of New England Puritanism.

" To expose one's body is art ; concealment is vulgar. When I dance, my object is to inspire reverence ; not to suggest anything vulgar. I do not appeal to the lower instincts of mankind as your half-clad chorus girls do.

" I would rather dance completely nude than strut in half-clothed suggestiveness, as many women do to-day on the streets of America.

" Nudeness is truth, it is beauty, it is art. Therefore it can never be vulgar ; it can never be immoral. I would not wear my clothes, if it were not for their warmth. My body is the temple of my art. I expose it as a shrine for the worship of beauty.

" I wanted to free the Boston audience from the chains that bound them. I saw them before me, shackled with a thousand links of custom and environment. I saw them chained by Puritanism, bound by their Boston Brahminism, enslaved and hidebound in mind and body. They wanted to be free ; they cried out for someone to loose their chains.

" They say I mismanaged my garments. A mere disarrangement of a garment means nothing. Why should I care what part of my body I reveal ? Why is one part more evil than another ? Is not all body and soul an instrument

through which the artist expresses his inner message of beauty? The body is beautiful; it is real, true, untrammelled. It should arouse not horror, but reverence. That is a difference between vulgarity and art, for the artist places his whole being, body and soul and mind, on the throne of art.

"When I dance, I use my body as a musician uses his instrument, as a painter uses his palette and brush, and as a poet the images of his mind. It has never dawned on me to swathe myself in hampering garments or to bind my limbs and drape my throat, for am I not striving to fuse soul and body in one unified image of beauty?

"Many dancers on the stage to-day are vulgar because they conceal and do not reveal. They would be much less suggestive if they were nude. Yet they are allowed to perform, because they satisfy the Puritan instinct for concealed lust.

"That is the disease that infects Boston Puritans. They want to satisfy their baseness without admitting it. They are afraid of truth. A nude body repels them. A suggestively clothed body delights them. They are afraid to call their moral infirmity by its right name.

"I don't know why this Puritan vulgarity should be confined to Boston, but it seems to be. Other cities are not afflicted with a horror of

beauty and a smirking taste for burlesque semi-exposures."

From Boston these words were telegraphed or mailed, in a more or less garbled fashion, to all the newspapers of the various states. Red Isadora and Puritan Boston were the subject of many an editorial, and uncounted letters from "Public-Spirit," "American," "Anti-Red," "Lover of the Truth."

CHAPTER XX

When Isadora had reached Chicago from Boston, the newspaper tempest in the Boston tea-cup was at its height. The reporters crowded her suite, delighted with the prospect of more snappy paragraphs. They were followed by press photographers, who hoped to get the dancer to pose for them and their respective papers holding aloft the dancing tunic she was said to have waved in the face of shocked Boston. But Isadora was already bored by the episode. To the reporters she said :

" I did not tear off my dress and cry : ' I'm Red ! I'm Red ! I'm Red ! ' I could not possibly have torn my dress off. It was fastened over the shoulders and around my hips and waist by elastic bands. Neither did I act and speak as the critics say. But when I remember the ghastly array of Symphony Hall, the horrible white plaster statues of Greek Gods, and the general fearfulness of the Boston Ideal of Life and Culture, I think some psychic message may have reached me. And as one sees from the Hindu Fakir, the

audience saw and heard, not what I said or did, but, perhaps, what I felt ! "

But the storm raged on, and the hundred-per-centers demanded that the " Red Dancer " be deported at once. Their moronic cry was taken up by their god-sent leader, Billy Sunday, who was at that moment in Washington trying to evangelise the pork-barrellers and Tea-Pot Domers.

" That Bolshevik hussy who doesn't wear enough clothes to pad a crutch—I'd like to be Secretary of Labour for fifteen minutes—I'd send her back to Russia and to Gorky, that——" Here a fit or foaming at the mouth stopped the flow of sewerage that poured from the mouth of the go-getter for Christ

The manager of the tour, alarmed by a series of cancellations of the Duncan performance, wired Isadora telling her to make no more curtain speeches. But she was not to be so easily dissuaded from one of the joys of her public life. The enthusiasm of her Chicago audience prompted her to come out, after having given two encores, and tell them with her most ingenuous smile :

" My manager tells me that if I make more speeches the tour is dead. Very well, the tour is dead. I will go back to Moscow where there is vodka, music, poetry, and dancing." Pause. " Oh, yes, and Freedom ! "

The audience applauded loudly. Isadora, encouraged, continued :

" Why can't I make speeches ? I have heard your Al Jolson make much longer speeches and say much more against the government than ever I did. Perhaps it is because he has a black face. I will put on a black face if I can make speeches. . . ."

More cheers and laughter from the audience. " I know why you are so sympathetic. It is because I was here twenty, twenty-one, twenty-four years ago. Do you know I feel much younger now than when I was here. It is because all my life I have only ' listened to music.' I have never been a dancer ; I do not like any kind of dancing, except, perhaps, the Japanese."

Back in the Waldorf-Astoria in New York, after the Chicago performances, there came the usual troupe of reporters armed with their itching note-books ready to be scratched by lying or flippant pencils. She said to them : " I am here to rest and recover from the persecution I have suffered from the American press throughout my trip.

" Every time I come to America, they howl around me like a pack of wolves. They treat me as though I were a criminal. They say I am a Bolshevik propagandist. It is not true. I am dancing the same dances that I did before

Bolshevism was invented. The Boston papers invented the story of my taking off my dress and waving it, crying, 'I'm Red!' It's an absolute lie.

"Why is it that my dances are copied in girls' schools all over the country, yet when I appear in person I am subjected to calumny on all sides. They are willing to copy my ideas but not to help the originator. . . . My dancing, which has inspired artists all over the world to a love of the beautiful, may not be seen in Boston, because an Irish politician says it is not proper. There is American Puritanism for you."

After a brief rest in New York, Isadora turned westward once more. She had a series of engagements to fulfil, starting with Indianapolis. When she arrived there she found that, while her impresario was not in the least disturbed by the happenings in Boston the month before, the mayor of the city, the Honourable Mr. Lew Shanks, was quite excitedly on the alert. No red dress was to to be taken off and waved seditiously in the faces of his townsfolk, he cried. He let the world know that he had ordered four policemen to be stationed on the stage and in the body of the theatre on the evening of the performance. They were to see to it that the dancer made no obscene gestures, and did not divest herself of one scarf or garment too many! That she was even allowed

to dance unshod and stockingless remains a mystery.

In a statement to the press, the priceless mayor said : " Isadora ain't fooling me any. She talks about art. Huh ! I've seen a lot of these twisters and I know as much about art as any man in America, but I never went to see these dances for art's sake. No, sir, I'll bet 90 per cent. of the men, or even 95 per cent., who go to see these so-called classical dances just say they think it's artistic to fool their wives.

" The thing artistic about a woman is her modesty. Remove so much of her clothing and that modesty is gone, and you have only vulgarity left, and that's what the men go to see.

" No, sir, these nude dancers don't get by me. If she goes to pulling off her clothes and throwing them up in the air, as she is said to have done in Boston, there's going to be somebody to get a ride in the wagon. If she pulls anything rough here we'll be right on her."

" Disgusting ! " remarked Isadora, as the Mayoral pronunciamento was read to her. " Disgustingly vulgar ! Why, it is not even English ! Thank God this man Shanks is only Mayor of Indianapolis. . . . It seems to me that even the savages of darkest Africa would appreciate my work more than some of the natives of the Middle West ! "

But the people in the theatre at Indianapolis did appreciate her art, and the services of the four Shanks policemen were not required. At the close of her specified programme, while the audiences cheered and applauded the great artist, she remained both silent and undemonstrative.

The twenty-second of November saw her in Louisville, where she gave a performance accompanied by the pianist, Max Rabinovitch. From there, with this same musician, she went on a brief tour of the larger cities, where she had been booked, and where the bookings had not since been cancelled : Kansas City, St. Louis, Memphis, Detroit, Cleveland, Baltimore, Philadelphia. Her tour was to end in Brooklyn, where a performance had been arranged in the Academy of Music for Christmas Night.

On Christmas Eve, Isadora had the intention of dancing in the Church of St. Mark's-in-the-Bouwerie. She had been invited to do so by the liberal-minded rector, Dr. William Norman Guthrie. She also proposed to speak a few words on " The Moralising Effect of Dancing on the Human Soul." What the dancer had to say on this subject will never be known. The Bishop of New York stepped in with the following statement to the press :

" The Bishop of New York has received letters of earnest protest from many parts of the country

in regard to an announcement widely published in the newspapers that a dancer whose exhibitions have aroused great criticism in many of our cities, would appear and speak at St. Mark's-in-the-Bouwerie, New York.

" In answer to these letters of protest, Bishop Manning wishes to state that the dancer referred to will not speak at St. Mark's Church, nor appear professionally in any connection with the church or its services."

CHAPTER XXI

On Saturday evening, January thirteenth, 1923, and on the following Monday evening, Isadora Duncan gave her last two performances in New York. Then, at the end of the month, wearied by the press campaign waged against her, worried by the state of her husband's mental and physical health, which his unfortunate experience with bootleg liquor had done nothing to ameliorate, penniless to the point of having to borrow the fare from "Lohengrin," she sailed, accompanied by Essenine and Jeanne, the faithful maid. She chose a *soi-disant* "dry" boat, the S.S. *George Washington*, and before it left the pier, she spoke her mind once more to the assembled reporters :

"I really ought not to say a word to you newspaper men. You have succeeded in ruining my tour, on which I had hoped so much to earn enough money to send back to my starving children in Moscow. Instead of taking back money, I have been compelled to borrow money from friends.

"Your papers have devoted whole columns to

printing details about my personal life during my tour ; what I ate, what I drank, whom I associated with, but never a word about my Art. Materialism is the curse of America. This is the last time you will ever see me in America. I would rather live in Russia on black bread and vodka than here in the best hotels. You know nothing of Love, Food, or Art.

" In Russia there is freedom. Here the people do not know what it is. Freedom here ? Pah ! Your capitalist press ruined my tour, because I came here to teach the people what Freedom really is. You people don't want Art. When I arrived here to give you real Art they put me on Ellis Island. If anyone here speaks his mind, the government prosecutes him, but they can't stop him from drinking !

" As to Prohibition, as they call it, no prohibition country for mine. Some of the liquor I drank here would have killed an elephant. It would have killed me, if I had stayed on much longer. It is possibly a good thing that I am going back to Moscow.

" Had I come to this country as a foreign financier to borrow money, I would have had a great reception. As I only came here as a recognised artist, I was sent to Ellis Island as a dangerous individual. I am not an anarchist or a Bolshevist. My husband and I are revolutionists. All geniuses

worthy of the name are. Every artist has to be one to-day to make a mark in the world.

" So good-bye, America ! I shall never see you again."

During the four months Isadora had been in America she was almost constantly on the front page of the newspapers. Besides the speeches and interviews quoted in the previous chapters there were many others which were printed and reprinted, with and without editorial notes, in all the papers of the Union down to the least important weekly in the corn belt. We have attempted to cull from various clippings brought back to Moscow by the dancer (there was a whole trunk full of newspaper clippings about the American tour) a few of the phrases from these interviews.

" Art is greater than Governments."

" There is nothing new in my Art, which I danced as a child. No one seems to understand, but I am trying to teach the world to think as I do. I have the idea I was born with, and my idea is the idea of life."

" All great men were never really understood

or appreciated before they reached a ripe age. I do not think I will be thoroughly understood for some time to come."

"Many people have tried to imitate my dancing on the stage, and though they may go through the same motions with their arms and legs, they do not give it the soul interpretation."

"My Art is an expression of life. My dancing is of the imagination and spirit, not of the body. When my body moves it is because my spirit moves it."

"I hate dancing. I am an *expressioniste* of beauty. I use my body as my medium, just as the writer uses his words. Do not call me a dancer."

"The thing that interests me most in the world is the education of children. All problems can be solved if one begins with the child."

"I believe, as Jean Jacques Rousseau did, that it is unnecessary to worry a child's brain during the first twelve years of his life. One should offer poetry, music, dancing, not book-learning, during

that period. The spiritual experiences last a lifetime."

" I want to start a dancing school in America. By music and the dance I want to train children how to live. I don't want to train them for the stage. I hate children on the stage—though they would be better there than in the gutter."

" I hate charity. Rich men work women blind in sweatshops, and then endow eye-hospitals ! "

" The people of this country are physically sick. They believe they are supreme in everything. We owe to Russia a great deal of our music, literature, and culture."

" I am a Russian now. I was born an American. And if I am a ' Red,' as they say, then those who go about so busily taking the alcohol out of wine, the beauty out of the theatre, and the joy out of living, are greys."

" America is so flippant. They talk of me flippantly. They imitate my dancing, but do not understand it. I preach freedom of the mind through freedom of the body : women, for

example—out of the prison of corsets into a free, flowing tunic like this."

" I went to a musical comedy the other night. Everyone was laughing. But I cried. The waste was terrible to me. It was ghastly to see beautiful young girls come out on the stage saying meaningless words and making meaningless gestures, when they could have been taught to be a force to the nation."

" There is no better way to put happiness into the hearts of children of the people than to teach them to dance."

" That gruesome thing we used to call middle-age should disappear. Women, if they will, can prove the power of mind over matter."

" Age is only self-hypnotism."

" One cannot make plans for life, or rules for marriage. Life comes, and one lives, each day. I am opposed to marriages. I believe in the emancipation of women."

" There are many who think, apparently, that life is a series of extremely boring habits which

they call virtues. I do not believe in putting chains and a padlock on life. Life is an experience, an adventure. It is an expression. Most Americans are hypnotised by a wrong idea of life, brought to this country by the Puritans."

CHAPTER XXII

"When in doubt," was one of Isadora's favourite mottoes, "always go to the best hotel." Arriving in Paris with what remained of L's loan, she and Essenine went straight to the Hotel Crillon. The house in the Rue de la Pompe having been let for six months to an American woman, there would be no chance of entering into it again for at least another month.

The arrival back in Paris, back in Europe, was too much for Essenine. He attempted at once to drown all his memories of America in wine, or rather vodka. But the alcohol imbibed with such Slavic gluttony, instead of bringing forgetfulness, roused all the demons within him. Like a maniac he rushed into his chamber at the Crillon Hotel one night and smashed all the mirrors and the woodwork. With difficulty he was mastered by the police and led off to the nearest "*Poste.*"

With what glee the American newspapers in Paris seized on this tit-bit of sensational news. How they embellished it with fantastic details! But Isadora came forward loyally to defend her

husband. And, as there is in France a law which gives a person whose name is mentioned in a newspaper or review the right to reply to any statement, with the further stipulation that the reply must be printed in the same place and in the same type as the contested article or statement, Isadora wrote to the American newspapers, the *Tribune* and the *Herald*, Paris editions.

The following is the letter which she wrote to the Paris edition of the *New York Herald* :

" To the *New York Herald.*

" Dear Sirs,

" I appeal to the Law and ask you to correct certain errors in your front page article appearing in the *New York Herald*, yesterday, February 16th.

" You state that my husband, Sergei Alexandrovitch Essenine, returned to our apartment at the Hotel Crillon and after breaking up everything in the apartment proceeded to throw articles of toilet at me. *This is not true*, as the night porter of the Crillon can attest. I left the hotel immediately on the entrance of Essenine, in company with my friend, Madame Howard Perch, with the object of calling to the aid of Essenine Doctor Jules Marcus. The crisis of madness which Essenine was suffering is not altogether due to alcohol, but is partly the

result of shell shock during the war ; terrible privations and sufferings during the revolution brought to the present crisis ; and also blood poisoning caused by the drinking of Prohibition whiskey in America—of this I have the attestation of a ce ebrated doctor of New York, who treated Essenine during different similar crises in that city, and who told me in case of recurrence to send at once for a physician.

" Essenine is one of the many victims of America's prohibition laws, from which one can read daily cases of death, blindness, or insanity.

" When Madame Perch and I returned to the Crillon with Doctor Marcus, Essenine had already been taken from the hotel. I write this in justice to Essenine, whom you have twice falsely stated as having attacked me. I know it is the politics of American journalism to make a joke of the matter of grief and disaster, but truly the young poet, who from his eighteenth year has known only the horror of war, revolution, and famine, is more deserving of Tears than Laughter. I think all Mothers will agree with me. Sergei Essenine is a great poet and in his normal state a most beautiful spirit, whom all his friends adore. Of him Gorky said to me, ' Since Gogol and Pushkin, we have not had so great a poet as Essenine. Alas, Gogol died insane, and Pushkin

was killed at an early age ; the Fate of Poets is marked with Tragedy.

" On our former stay in Paris, Essenine and I dined with Madame Cécile Sorel and many other friends, where the drinking of good French wines only inspired Essenine with happy thoughts. He admired and loved Paris—and continually exclaimed, ' How lovely ! This is real culture. Here all is Beauty ! '

" As you can imagine, what has happened has left me profoundly grieved and desolate. I brought Essenine from Russia, where the conditions of his life were of terrible hardship, to save his genius for the World. He is returning to Russia to save his reason, and I know that there will be many hearts all over the world who will pray with me that this great imaginative poet may be saved for future creation of that Beauty which the World so needs.

" Sincerely,

" Isadora Duncan.

" P.S.—By the way, since the name of George Washington is America's Holy Symbol for truth, why do you falsely state that there was no whiskey to be had in that boat. Essenine received as much bad whiskey in that boat as he did in every other place in America, in every town in which we travelled, constantly offered to him by hundreds of sellers of poison.

" *Vive la Vérité !*
" *Vive la sagesse Française !*
" *Et les bons vins de la FRANCE !*
" I. D."

From the Crillon, where the coldly polite management told her that her notorious presence was undesirable, Isadora and her friend Mrs. Perch went to the Hotel du Rhin. From there, with the aid of several influential friends, they managed to get the violent and unhappy poet out of the hands of the police. Essenine once free, Isadora sought to escape the pestering reporters by going off with him to Versailles, there to stay at the Hotel Trianon. But the keen-nosed American newspaper men were not so easily put off the scent, and their newspapers still continued to occupy themselves with the doings of the dancer and her husband.

Finally it was decided that it was better for Essenine to return to Russia, rather than run the risk of falling foul of the French police force, which did not seem to think much of the turbulent Russian, either as a poet or a citizen. Jeanne, the maid, who spoke a Russian language of sorts, was delegated to see the poet on the first stage of his journey. With their papers put in order by good and influential friends of Isadora, they crossed from France into Germany

and, having left the poet among his compatriots in Berlin, Jeanne returned to her mistress.

Back again in Rue de la Pompe, Isadora began to look forward to the future. She wanted to give performances, but it was difficult to find an impresario. Her secretary, Jo Milward, and her brother Raymond decided to arrange two performances with orchestra at the Trocadéro. But without good organisation even the magic name of Isadora Duncan is not sufficient to pack the great arena of that famous hall. So these two performances, while they brought forth, at Isadora's pleading, money for the starving children in Russia, brought her no surplus cash to go on with.

The witty Parisian chronicler, Michel-Georges-Michel, writing of the first soirée at the Trocadéro, said : " Our genial and nevertheless charming Isadora, following her habit, has just delivered an astonishing discourse after her evening of dance at the Trocadéro.

" She walked to the extreme edge of the stage, still covered with flowers. Behind her stood Van Dongen, while at her left was M. Rappoport, and at her right was her brother, Raymond. . . .

" ' My friends of twenty years. . . . Come closer, look at me. I have two things to say to you. First, it has been written that I am a Bolshevist. . . . Have I the look of a Bolshevist ? '

" ' No ! No ! '

" ' But I am from Moscow, where I vainly sought for Bolshevists. I met them in Paris, in New York. . . . But in Moscow I never met a single Bolshevist. But I saw many little children dying of hunger. Give me some pennies for the starving children of Moscow, who do not know anything about politics. . . .'

" The notes rained on the stage, as a while before the rose petals had done.

" ' Thanks, thanks . . . Now I will tell you the second thing : I do not know how to dance at all ; not at all. At least I do not know if I know how to dance. Place your hands as I do on your heart, listen to your soul, and all of you will know how to dance as well as I or my pupils do. . . . There is the true revolution. Let the peoples place their hands in this way on their hearts, and in listening to their souls they will know how to conduct themselves. . . .

" ' Bravo ! Bravo !

" ' For revolution should not be political. When I was a little child I dreamed of breaking the mould of the bourgeois scheme of things and making it over again. Do you understand ? I was the first communist. At present . . .'

" Rappoport turned his bespectacled gaze to the beard of Van Dongen and said with his gnomish voice : ' If she continues to spout sociology, I am going to dance. . . .' "

PORTRAIT OF ESSENINE PAINTED BY BORIS GRIGORIEFF, PARIS, 1923.

There is another story told of Isadora during this period, which lifts a corner of the curtain and shows a part of her life and one of the sides of her character.

One afternoon toward dusk, one of her old friends, Dougie, called on her at the Rue de la Pompe. He found her there with Essenine, who had returned from Berlin. The poet seemed to be in excellent humour and was sitting daily to his friend the eminent Russian painter, Boris Grigorieff, for the portrait shown on another page. As the painter was about to leave after his séance, Isadora asked him if he would not like to stay for dinner.

"And you must also stay with us, Dougie. I don't know what there is. Probably nothing. You see, I owe the cook 600 francs. She has been feeding us for the past week!"

Later, as the maid came in to lay the table, with a cloth which in other days Isadora would have been ashamed to see on her servants' table, so rumpled and soiled it was, the door-bell rang. In the little salon adjoining the dining-room there was a hurried consultation. Isadora looked in at the door and asked her guests to excuse her for a quarter of an hour.

In half an hour she appeared again with her arms full of packages. She was followed by her secretary, also bearing flowers and bottles and

packages. The soiled tablecloth and the rumpled serviettes and the half-empty bottle of dead beer were all cleared from the table. The table was set anew with a beautiful checkered cloth fresh from the store, and serviettes to match were laid at the places. The carnations were arranged in a vase in the centre of the table. And up from the kitchen came the *bouillon* that was to start the meal.

Then the other packages were untied and placed on plates. There was an enormous lobster, two large devilled crabs, salad, and early strawberries. There was also the sad-looking boiled beef garnished with sad-looking vegetables, which would, with its *bouillon*, have otherwise composed the meal. To wash all this down there were four bottles of "champagne nature," which, though it costs but a tenth of the price of labelled champagne, often tastes just as good, the hostess said.

The explanation of this feast was told as the meal progressed. The secretary had been out all afternoon scouting for money, and had managed to extract from one of the dancer's debtors some 300 francs, a slight fraction of the sum owed. When Isadora received this money just before dinner and remembered that she had invited Grigorieff and Dougie as her guests for a meal that really, according to her standards, did not

exist, she immediately left the house and called a taxi. With the meagre sum turned over to her by the secretary, she managed to buy a new tablecloth, half a dozen serviettes, carnations, the lobster and crabs, the strawberries, and wine. Only the fact that she was left with only a few francs to pay the taxi back prevented her, she said, from buying a whole roast duck or a Strasburg *pâté de foie gras.*

To her brother Raymond, who in the meantime had come in and was looking with almost puritanical disapproval on the laughing feasters, Isadora offered the claw of the lobster.

" I don't eat meat," he said shortly.

" But this is not meat, Raymond. This is fruit. *Frutti di Mare ! Frutti di Mare !* " she repeated, and laughed to see the look on her uncomprehending brother's face.

CHAPTER XXIII

After her first performance, which took place at the Trocadéro on May twenty-seventh, Isadora gave a reception to several of her intimate friends—a small group of artists and poets. The Russian poet did not find the company to his liking and went upstairs to his room. Later, as someone was playing a sonata of Beethoven, he rushed in wild-eyed, golden hair rumpled, crying in Russian: "Band of bloated fish, mangy sleigh-rugs, bellies of carrion, grub for soldiers, you awoke me!"

And seizing a candelabrum he swung it towards a mirror, which crashed to the floor. Several of the men tried to master the kicking, vehement *moujik*, and one of the servants telephoned to the nearest Commissariat. Soon four *agents cyclistes* arrived, and Essenine was carried off, softly saying: "*Bon politzie. Aller avec vous!*"

Next morning, Isadora, on the advice of her friends, had made arrangements to have her husband transported from the *Poste de Police* to a *Maison de Santé*. It has been said by the friends of Essenine that the dancer allowed her poor

husband to be thrown into a common asylum. But considering that the *Maison de Santé* was an extremely expensive private one situated at St. Mandé on the outskirts of Paris and that among its many distinguished patients at that moment was Pierre Louys, the author of *Aphrodite*, such a charge is absurd and untrue. Isadora's conduct under all the difficult circumstances of her relations with Essenine was characterised by loyalty, forbearance, and magnanimous love.

With her private life still being probed into by inquisitive reporters and set out in scandal sheets, Isadora did not remain silent as many another would have done. The following letter was written in reply to a particularly scurrilous article from the pen of a well-known White Russian author, which was published in the French journal, *L'Éclair*.

" Sir,

" Mr. Sergei Essenine and I wish to protest against the lying writing published by Monsieur Merejkowsky in the *Éclair* of the 16th of June.

" Monsieur Merejkowsky says :

" 1st Lie :

" ' Mr. Sergei Essenine and Madame Isadora Duncan were expelled from America and then from France.' This is a lie. Not only were we *not* expelled from America, but my representations

in Carnegie Hall were attended seven times by audiences of 4,000 enthusiastic persons, who acclaimed me with bravos for a half an hour after the programme—enthusiasm little known in America. What then does our deportation consist of?

" 2nd Lie :

" Our ' deportation from France '—the while we are living very happy in our house.

" Monsieur Merejkowsky then writes, on the subject of my Art, that my tired legs amused the public at the Trocadéro.

" To this I can only reply that I have never sought to amuse the public ; my one desire being to make them feel what I myself am feeling. And sometimes I have succeeded. But my legs are the least of my means, for, being neither an acrobat nor a dancer, I have the pretensions of being an artiste. And even were I legless I might still create my Art.

" 3rd Lie :

" Monsieur Merejkowsky dares to say that I am beaten by my ' young husband.' It is a happy thing for Monsieur Merejkowsky that he is protected by his great age, otherwise Essenine would force him to eat these words. Essenine says : '*yest starry*, *starry*. He is old, old. Were he not I would make him answer for his insults.'

" 4th Lie :

" Monsieur Merejkowsky says that during a

spectacle at the Trocadéro I called Lenin an angel. The truth is I called Essenine an angel, for he is the man I love. I did not speak of Lenin, and if I had spoken of him I would have said, ' He is a man of genius,' but I never would have called him an angel.

" Moreover, I have nothing to do with politics.

" During the war I danced the *Marseillaise*, because I felt that it was the road that led to Liberty.

" To-day I dance to the sound of the *Internationale* because I have the feeling that it is the Hymn of the Future and of Humanity.

" I went to Moscow, allured by the great art dream of directing a school with a thousand children ; after a year's work I feel I sowed some joy and some good about me, and with the memory of that I only spoke of a Poet and the little children who are hungry.

" In the *Nouvelle Revue* of the 15th of May, 1923, Mr. Brian Chaninov has written :

" ' At the present time and since the death of Alexander Blok, who died in 1921, Essenine is incontestably the most celebrated, if not the greatest, poet in Russia. This young man is a natural force.' This is the poet that Monsieur Merejkowsky would like to stigmatise by calling him a ' drunken *moujik*.'

" Edgar Allan Poe, the glory of American

poetry, was a dipsomaniac. And what can be said of Paul Verlaine, Baudelaire, Moussorgsky, Dostoievsky, and Gogol, who died in a mad-house? Yet they all left works of immortal genius.

"I quite understand that M. Merejkowsky could never live in the proximity of such beings, talent always being shocked by genius. In any case, I wish for M. Merejkowsky a very peaceful old age in his bourgeois retreat and a respectable funeral with black plumes and black-mittened hired mourners.

"As for me I prefer being burned alive at the stake in Moscow, while thousands of children in red tunics dance about me singing the *Internationale.*

"'Russia will be reborn,' writes Merejkowsky. Does he not know that Russia has just been reborn, the first miracle since Jesus Christ?

"And it has not only been the Renaissance of Russia, but that of all the Earth, of Humanity, of the Future.

"(Signed) ISADORA DUNCAN."

Some time after her second performance on June third, which was less of a success than the first, Isadora decided that there was nothing to be done but sell off her furniture in the Rue de la Pompe, rent the house on a long lease, and return to Russia with Essenine, now out of the *Maison*

de Santé. Bit by bit the various pieces of furniture were sold, with slight consideration for their artistic or intrinsic values. Sold also—and this to pay the bill of three thousand francs presented daily by a dunning tailor who, before the American trip, had made some clothes for the poet—were the robes and suits which her friend Poiret had specially designed for her to wear in Russia. The house was cleared and let to a dubious Russian, and off went Isadora and her husband back to Moscow by way of Berlin.

RUSSIA 1923-1924

CHAPTER XXIV

At the beginning of August, 1923—the fifth to be exact—Isadora Duncan and Sergei Essenine landed in Moscow. They had been gone about fifteen months. As she descended from the train, she looked harassed and worried. She was in reality very glad that she had finally arrived at the end of an extremely tiring task ; she had brought back her poet, as she had promised herself she would do, to the place where he belonged.

The object of her solicitous care stumbled down the steps of the coach. He was inebriated, and that as much, perhaps, from the overpowering emotional excitement of being back again in Russia as from the effects of the continual stream of vodka that had flowed down his patriotic throat since his entry over the border of his native land. And in his riotous joy he had smashed all the windows of the coach.

Accompanied by Irma, who had come with the Secretary of the School to welcome them home, they drove away from the station followed by a cart containing a bewildering array of new

wardrobe trunks, suitcases with shining brass locks and fasteners, and heavy leather bags. The majority, and the newest of these, were the property of the same young man who, not so long before, used to dash away from twenty Pretchistenka with his two shirts and toilet articles all wrapped up in a page of the *Pravda*.

When they arrived at the school, which was at that moment deserted, the children all being in the country for the summer, Essenine threw himself on a couch to become sober. And while he slept his heavy sleep, Isadora, in her inimitable manner spiced with unfailing wit, regaled her friends with travellers' tales : Ellis Island, Boston, Indianapolis, the wetness of America, and the high cost of breakage in Parisian hotels.

When she had finished her travelogue, or when he had awakened sobered and refreshed from his nap, they began to think of lunch. But there was nothing to eat in the house, and the cook was in the country with the children. There was nothing else to do but go out to a restaurant. They decided to go to the *Medved* (The Boar), which had a little garden, where they could enjoy whatever faint breeze might blow over Moscow, stifling and dusty as always in midsummer.

As they seated themselves at a table, a young man with a round and pink smiling face came to

the table to greet Essenine. He was formally introduced to the company as " Tovarish Blumkin." He had been sometime secretary to the great Trotsky, in whose company the poet had met him.

When the newcomer had taken the proffered seat at the table and was conversing affably with his neighbour, the poet whispered to his wife :

" Do you know who he is ? "

" No," she replied, thinking at the same time that he looked like any other bright-faced, Jewish young man.

" Well, he's the fellow who assassinated Count Mirbach, the German Ambassador, in 1918 ! " . . .

After the lunch, Isadora suggested going out to the country place where the school was established for the summer. She longed to see how the children looked since her absence and how they had progressed under the tutelage of Irma. Thinking it would be only two hours' drive from the city, they hired a motor-car—a rare and expensive thing in the Moscow of those days. The roads outside Moscow, however, were so bad that it took them well over four hours to make the journey. When they finally arrived at the outside of the grounds leading to the house, it was already quite dark. The children, who had been on the *qui vive* all day, having been told of

the return of Isadora to Russia and to Moscow, had sent out scouts with lanterns to signal the arrival of their teacher. And when she stepped out of the car, they danced her up to the house. . . .

But she did not stay long among the happy children in the country. Next day, with the depressing summer rain pouring down, Essenine decided that he wanted to be back in town, and she, perforce, accompanied him. When he arrived again at Pretchistenka he left her there and went off and was not seen or heard from again for over three days.

Each morning Isadora would say : " Something must have happened to him. He's been hurt. He's had an accident. He's ill somewhere." And each night after an anxious day of waiting and hoping she would say : " This cannot go on like this. This is the end ! "

After the third day's wait, she made up her mind to go off somewhere far away from Moscow, to rest for the remainder of the summer season. She went out and bought two tickets for the train going to the Caucasus that night. Then having decided that the Essenine episode in her life was over, with a relieved mind, she started to re-pack her valises. Jeanne having been left in Paris, there was no maid to help her, and she called in Irma, who was to travel with her, to give friendly

assistance. As Irma laid out the various things necessary for the voyage, she soon discovered to her amazement how poor her teacher was in the matter of personal lingerie : she had not even a nightgown among her things. As for her dress trunks, they were practically bare. They contained only a few of the dresses which had been taken out from Russia. When questioned, Isadora ruefully smiled and replied :

" No, I haven't a thing. All the new things I used to buy in New York and Paris disappeared shortly after I bought them. I thought at first it was Jeanne. Then one day I discovered by chance that a new black ' Fortuny ' gown which had arrived a few days before at the Rue de la Pompe was in one of Essenine's new trunks. Bit by bit, all my lingerie seemed to evaporate from the drawers of the commode. As for my money . . . ! " An all too eloquent gesture told the rest.

" Well," said Irma, " there is only one thing to do in such a case. Open the trunks and take out what belongs to you."

" Oh ! " she cried, with a tragic, frightened look, " we mustn't do that. He has a mania about people touching his trunks. He has threatened more than once to shoot me, if I dare look in them. And I know that in one of them he keeps a loaded revolver. No, no, we mustn't touch the trunks."

But Isadora's friends soon found a key to fit the largest of the suitcases, and in a second it was opened, displaying its bizarre contents. While various keys and pointed instruments were tried without success on the other trunks and bags, and someone was sent out to find a skilled locksmith, Irma was busy on the floor of the studio cutting out rough patterns for nightgowns from a bolt of heavy aeroplane silk which had topped the contents of the open valise. Besides this useful material, it also contained a veritable arsenal for a travelling salesman in barber-shop supplies : boxes and loose cakes of expensive soaps, bottles of bay rum, lotions, brilliantines, tubes of tooth-paste and shaving-soap, large and small bottles of assorted perfumes, and packages of safety-razor blades. These were all, no doubt, future gifts which would *épater* the poet's family and friends.

If we are to believe the writer Mariengoff, who tells of Essenine on his return throwing about joyously, in the cafés and restaurants which he frequented, handfuls of Chervonitz notes (each worth five dollars), then we can imagine that one, at least, of the other unopened cases and trunks contained a stock of the dollar bills filched away from Isadora in America and France. Mariengoff goes on to tell of the poet bringing the collection of trunks to a friend's house afterward. He would

go about saying to everybody, finger mysterious on lips :

" My trunks ! Mustn't let them touch them. Don't let anybody in. I know them. They come here with nails in their pockets ! " . . .

This mania about the trunks was carried to such a point that each time he met any of his friends on the street he went through a peculiar ceremony. Before greeting them he would sniff about their body to see if they had on his perfume or his hair lotions. Having satisfied himself on this point he would then carefully examine their neck-wear and look down at their ankles to see that they were not sporting one of his cravats or a pair of his valuable silk socks !

The actual contents of all the other treasure cases will never be known, for just as the locksmith was about to try his skill on the fancy locks, the like of which he had never seen before, Essenine burst into the room. Isadora, forgetting all about her resolution to end matters with him, rushed toward the door with welcoming arms outstretched, crying :

" Sergei ! Sergei ! Where have you been ? Isadora *grusna*, *grusna* ! " (sad, sad !) While Irma pushed the bewildered locksmith from the room by a side door, calling after him in a loud voice :

" No, we won't put them down in the cellar after all."

Essenine glared about the room. Then, pushing Isadora from him, he rushed to his precious property, shouting like one demented:

" My trunks ! Who's been meddling with my trunks ? Don't you dare touch my trunks. I'll kill the person who touches my trunks. My trunks ! Ha, my trunks ! "

He quieted down a little when they explained that they were only about to move the trunks out of the room, because they thought he wasn't coming back again. Then he went to one and, having taken from his pocket an important key wallet, he selected the right one and opened the wardrobe trunk. While he was occupied taking out what he wanted Isadora went over and quickly pulled at something.

" Look ! Isadora's dress ! " she cried.

He jumped up and tried to snatch it away from her, and a childish tug of war began between them. In the end he let go, and Isadora threw the dress to Irma. Then, with more agility than he, she ran to the trunk and pulled something else out. Again the infantile tugging back and forth, he crying the while :

" It's mine ! It's for my sister. You gave it to me in Paris. It's mine ! "

Isadora : " No ! No ! This is for Irma. Poor

Irma. No present from Paris. This present for Irma."

And with that he let go his end of the dress and rushed to close the trunk before anything else could be extracted from it. Then he made a little paper package, as of old, with his shirt and toilet articles, and was about to go from the room. Isadora stood in front of him, and looking at him more sternly than she had ever done before, she told him in her broken Russian that if he went off again without telling her where he was going and how long he was going to stay, it was the end. She would not spend another three days worrying about him. And in any case she was leaving Moscow that night.

He left the room laughing incredulously. Later that same day, however, in the evening, just before the Southern Express pulled out of the Kazansky Station, he appeared on the platform. He was quite sober and smiling. By some method best known to himself he had found out from which of the many Moscow stations his wife was leaving, and had come to say good-bye. Touched by his appearance, she tried to persuade him to come on the train. He needed the rest. It would do him good after all the emotions of the return.

But he would not be persuaded. He did promise to come later, perhaps to the Crimea, and

before the last bell rang they bade each other farewell most tenderly, almost as though it was their first parting. And Isadora continued waving her scarf until he was well out of sight.

CHAPTER XXV

The place Isadora was headed for in the Caucasus was Kislavodsk, a health resort as famous in Russia as Vichy is in France. For there are situated the sparkling Narzan springs, whose charged waters are bottled and sent out to be sold all over the vast territories of the Soviet Republics.

After two and a half days' not too comfortable journeying, the travellers reached the little town at six o'clock one August morning. As they stepped off the train, amid the bustling and shouting, the first person their astonished eyes lighted on was an old friend from New York—Max Eastman, the poet and writer. He was down at the station at that early hour, he replied in answer to their first question, to buy some milk. Pressed further, he told them that he was in Kislavodsk with Leon Trotsky, whose guest he was, writing a biography of the famous leader.

Eastman very helpfully piloted the two newcomers about the place, helped them find rooms at the hotel, and then entertained them at lunch. After lunch he went off and was seen no more,

either closely or at a distance, during the remainder of their stay in the resort.

Isadora slipped easily into the routine of the place. Each morning she took the refreshing mineral-water baths. Then she had lunch at the Kurhaus, followed by a leisurely drive in the wonderful surrounding country. In the evening there was dinner again in the Kurhaus, and after dinner the theatre or a concert given by the symphony orchestra. This continued for a week or so, until she was bored and thought she ought to be up and doing something.

It was then that she decided to give a tour through the Caucasus, beginning with a performance in Kislavodsk. To this end she wired to Moscow for her secretary to come down with someone to arrange the performances. When they arrived, she mapped out her plans. Her first performance at Kislavodsk would be her Tchaikowsky programme with orchestral accompaniment. The orchestra, mostly men from the Petrograd Philharmonic, knew the *Symphonie Pathétique* by heart. The *Marche Slave*, however, they told Isadora, they had not played for many years ; they would have to rehearse it before the performance.

The morning of the performance found the orchestra behind closed curtains on the semi-circular band-stand on the Kursaal grounds,

SNAPSHOT TAKEN OF ISADORA DUNCAN, IRMA DUNCAN, AND THEIR MANAGER IN KISLAVODSK, AUGUST, 1923.

playing over the *Marche Slave*. As the strident trumpet notes of the Czarist hymn rang out on the stillness of the morning air, the few early promenaders who were not taking their bath that day could scarcely believe their ears. They looked at each other in astonishment. They began to collect in twos and threes before the curtains that hid the orchestra from view. Before the unwitting leader had put his musicians through a third repetition of the march, he was faced by an angry Tcheka official who demanded to know what the brazen reiteration of the Czarist hymn meant.

Trembling, the poor conductor who had doubtless enjoyed hearing the hymn trumpeted forth over the Tchaikowskian Slavic embroidery, explained to the dreaded official that he meant nothing by this imaginary counter-revolutionary demonstration. He had been ordered by Madame Isadora Duncan, the well-known dancer, to rehearse this piece by the celebrated Russian composer, which she was to dance that same evening in the Theatre. He showed the unconvinced official both the programme and the Tchaikowsky score. The Tcheka man then stalked off, but not before he had ordered the conductor to leave off, for that morning and the rest of time, sending out seditious strains to the curious bystanders who now filled the space in front of

the band-stand. And no doubt there were many in that crowd who had a real emotional thrill out of hearing the Czarist hymn, for both during and after the revolution Kislavodsk was a hot-bed of counter-revolutionary agitation and fighting.

Naturally the theatre that evening was crowded to the last gallery seat, and the atmosphere was electrical, for the word had gone about that *la* Duncan was to dance *God Save the Czar*. But when Isadora came on the stage to begin her programme she was told by two armed Tcheka men who were waiting there that she could not go on unless the *Marche Slave* was taken from the programme. Isadora tried to explain in her broken Russian that she had danced the same dance before all the Communist leaders on the 4th Anniversary of the Revolution and that Comrade Lunatcharsky had written most enthusiastically about it. She had danced it all over the world in a revolutionary manner and she was not going to stop now in a small Russian town. The two uninterested and uncomprehending officials merely answered that they would not budge until they had her word that she would not dance to the measures of the Czarist hymn.

Without deigning to speak further with them, she went out by the side of the curtains and faced the impatient audience. After the first applause

had died away Isadora asked if there was anyone in the theatre who could interpret her German into Russian. A man in the first row stood up and volunteered his aid, which was in reality quite unnecessary, as most of the people composing the audience were of the richer bourgeois element in the town. In fact they were the only ones able to pay the high prices billed by the impresario. And they all understood and spoke German or its poor lingual relation, Yiddish.

Isadora began : " There are members of the Police back stage." (The audience stirred uneasily.) " They have come to arrest me ! " (The audience settled back to enjoy the fun.) " They have come to arrest me if I attempt to dance for you this evening the *Marche Slave* of Tchaikowsky. But I'm going to dance it even if they arrest me afterwards. After all, the prison cannot be much worse than my room at the Grand Hotel." (Here the audience laughed uproariously at the dancer's thrust. The majority of them were fellow guests and sufferers at the vermin-infested caravanserai.)

At that moment the volunteer interpreter, who had remained silent, said in a loud voice :

" You need not worry, Tovarish Duncan. You can begin your performance. As President of the Soviet Ispolkom I give you permission to dance the Tchaikowsky march."

The excited public applauded wildly, and Isadora, with a word and a smile of thanks to the President, withdrew behind the curtain.

During the speech Irma had managed to push the two Tcheka men forcibly from the sacred blue-green Isadoran carpet. The secretary, who might have helped, was sitting in a wheel-chair unable to move, for his ankle, which was badly sprained by a throw from his horse the day before, was all bound up. But without more ado the two men left the stage ; Isadora returned, and the performance continued to the increasing cheers of an audience thrilled by the great dramatic rendering of the two Tchaikowsky works and the *Internationale*.

But the Tcheka was not at all pleased with the figure it had cut in the affair. While Isadora and Irma were dining together in the Kursaal the next evening, a frightened messenger came rushing in to tell them that the police were in the secretary's room. When the two women hurried back to the hotel and ran up to the room, they found the two officials of the night before in conversation with one of higher rank. They were all in full uniform with revolvers strapped to their belts. The outside and inside doors were guarded by armed soldiers. The secretary, pale and trembling, lay on the bed unable to move because of his ankle. He well knew that if he left that

room he would never be sure of returning again to it, or any other earthly abode.

When Isadora heard that they had come to arrest the inoffensive secretary and had not dared to touch her or Irma, who had really insulted their dignity, she turned on the highest official. And in her fury she caught on to the lowest Russian word she knew and hurled it at him with concentrated rage :

" *Swolitch !* "

Instinctively his hand went to his revolver holster.

" Yes, *Swolitch ! Swolitch !* " cried Isadora ; and then poured forth a torrent of fiery, wrathful words over his shaven, bullet head.

The poor man on the bed tried his best to pacify the insulted official by telling him that " *Swolitch* " was something quite different in English.

As two soldiers were ordered to come forward and guard the man in bed, Isadora suddenly remembered that the all-powerful Trotsky was still in Kislavodsk. She ran from the room crying to Irma that she was off to find Trotsky. The soldiers tried to stop her, but she evaded them and reaching her own room hastily scribbled a note. Then dashing downstairs, she found a porter and tried to make him understand that she wanted to go right away to the villa where Trotsky was living.

With the bewildered servant as her guide, and her way up the dark, hilly road lit by a flickering lantern, Isadora marched off to find the War Minister's house. After searching about for a quarter of an hour, they came to a huge villa, whose entrance was guarded by two Tcheka men. They refused to let the strange and excited woman past and called the officer of the guard. Having demanded her business, he said it was impossible for anyone to see Tovarish Trotsky. In the end she handed him her pencilled note to take into the villa, and after a wait he came back to tell her that she could return to the hotel. Everything would be all right.

When she descended the hilly road and finally reached the hotel, she found the secretary's room in disorder, for every drawer and trunk and bag had been searched and examined. The armed soldiers left on an order given to them by someone sent from the high Tcheka official who headed the bodyguard of Trotsky. The other officers followed, but not before they had told Isadora—quite in the manner of the less harmful villains of the melodramas—that they would have their revenge for all the insults they had received from her that evening. Isadora's reply was to repeat with more intense vigour and expressive disdain the one word : " *Swolitch !* "

CHAPTER XXVI

After the Tcheka episode at Kislavodsk, Isadora felt that it might be safer for her and her friends to move further afield. The Tcheka, balked of its prey, was not to be trusted—anything was liable to happen. Therefore she decided to go on to Baku, the famous oil city that lies on the shores of the Caspian Sea ; a train journey of two days and a night from the health resort.

Arriving in Baku she went to the Hôtel d'Europe. When she entered, the proprietor and his wife came forward to greet her in German and bid her welcome. Many, many years before, they said, they had both seen her in Germany. The dancing of the *schöne* American girl was one of their most cherished memories. So during her stay they bestowed a thousand gracious little kindnesses on their honoured guest and always attended her wants themselves, trying to make her as comfortable as the circumstances would allow.

The hotel had a roof-garden where a small orchestra played during meals, and there Isadora dined each evening, looking over the strange

panorama of the town and the surrounding countryside : minarets and oil-towers and the moon rising out of the tideless Caspian Sea.

In the afternoons Isadora and Irma would go driving beyond the edge of the town ; sometimes inland to the beautiful surrounding country ; sometimes along the cliff roads that bordered the sea. It was on one of the drives by the sea that they came into a memorable village, all silent, the doors of whose seemingly windowless houses opened into quiet courtyards fragrant with flowers, shady with aged fig-trees, musical with the waters of fountains by whose basins sat quiescent, veiled women. As they left the town, they passed by the bare cemetery, where other veiled women sat by the slanting stones. And from the minaret of the little mosque a muezzin called the faithful to prayer. A world removed from the toiling, begrimed class-conscious proletariat of Baku ! It was a regular Persian village, and all the inhabitants were Moslems, said the driver.

On the drive back from this forgotten place, they passed a lovely cove with a great stretch of white sandy beach. There, while the unconcerned *isvostchick* sat eating hunks of watermelon bought in the village, they used his phaeton as a bath-house and went swimming in the dense and tepid waters of the Caspian.

During her two weeks stay in the oil city,

Isadora gave several performances with orchestral accompaniment. She found, however—as always —that most of the receipts went to pay the musicians. Yet she would not, if she could help it, dance to a piano. For one of her recitals in Baku she rehearsed with an eminent local pianist. The day of her performance, however, she decided that she must have orchestral support for her programme. Even the free performance which she gave for the workers of the oil-fields was to the accompaniment of a full-sized orchestra.

This unforgettable performance was given in a workmen's club in the *Tchorny Gorod* (Black Town). Into the long, low-ceilinged room two thousand men and women crowded ; two thousand toil-worn humans with oil-grimed faces, who had never had the luxury of hearing a symphony orchestra. The atmosphere of such an overcrowded room on a Caucasian August night can be well imagined. It even proved too much for several of the women of the town, who fainted away during the performance.

In the hall there was no stage ; only an oversized speaker's platform. There were no lighting fixtures ; only a powerful, glaring white light that hung down from the ceiling over the platform. There were no curtains and no space between the audience and the stage ; the bodies of the people in the first row were pressed against

the timbers of the platform. As for the orchestra, it had been pushed off into a corner of the room at the left side of the stage. Yet under such conditions, mindless of the intolerable heat and consequent nauseating odours, the persecuting flies, the lack of any lighting effects and necessary curtains, Isadora, who at other times was more than exacting about the details of her performances, danced for these entranced, open-mouthed workers as she had seldom danced for greater and more fruitful audiences. She remembered the lines of Matthew Arnold :

Airs from the Eden of Youth
Awake and stir in their soul ;
The past returns—they feel
What they are, alas ! what they were.
They, not Nature, are changed.
Well I know what they feel !
Hush, for tears
Begin to steal into their eyes !
Hush, for fruit
Grows from such sorrow as theirs ! . . .

Isadora gave them all she had of heroic, sculptural beauty ; but not without a supreme effort of will and concentration. At the most tragic part of the *Symphonie Pathétique* a noisy

blue-bottle fly settled on her nose and would not remove itself. Afterwards, as Irma helped her to dress, she said :

" I tried to concentrate on my expression, but how could I with a fly that insisted on sitting on the tip of my nose. I tried to wrinkle my nose and move my head, but it always came back again. Finally I gave up and resigned myself, thinking somehow that maybe Christ on the Cross was so tormented."

The day following this performance, Isadora gave a free matinée for the children of the workers in a little club in Belachany. Before the performance started, she called a few of them up on the stage and gave them a first lesson in the dance. Then she danced for them some Schubert Waltzes, the *Moment Musical*, and a Nocturne of Chopin. Her childish onlookers were so enraptured, their applause so spontaneous and joyful, that the dancer was moved to adopt several of the most talented ones for the school in Moscow. They would be taught there for a few years ; and then return to Baku to teach other little ones how to dance with their arms outthrown towards the light. The money for the support of this scheme was to come from the Government Oil Company. But after much empty discussion that trailed away into futility, the idea was allowed to perish. There was no

capable official with sufficient energy and foresight to see it through.

Isadora was so delighted, however, with the children that she arranged a special gala for them. Through the kindness of her German hosts at the hotel, she obtained the little orchestra from the roof garden and with their accompaniment rehearsed Irma in many of the lovely dances that she herself had created and danced almost two decades before—creations of love and adolescent joy ; of ecstasy and happy grace. The day of the matinée, Irma fell ill and could not dance. Then Isadora, rather than disappoint her waiting audience of eager children, decided to dance all these youthful dances that she had not danced for so many seasons.

With flowers in her auburn hair and dressed in her ethereal pink tunic, she danced herself back to the Land of Gold. She was as Witter Bynner had said of her before, " a rosy girl caught in a rain of love."

To the music of Gluck, Schubert, Brahms, Chopin, she danced all the girlish ecstasies and raptures with an artless joy and an effortless grace. By the great power of her dominating will and the magic of her genius, she caught the spirit of fleeting youth and held it captive for an afternoon.

CHAPTER XXVII

From Baku, Isadora continued her journey on to Tiflis. On one of her earlier *tournées* in Russia she had visited this beautiful old Georgian capital that stands on the banks of the turbulent Kura, and she had many happy and interesting memories of it ; the beautiful black-eyed natives, the excellent wines, the sulphur baths, and the excursions in the mountainous countryside.

A few hours after her arrival in town, she was visited by Tovarish Eleava, the President of the Caucasian Republic. He came to pay homage to the dancer of whom he had heard great things. Eleava, besides being a famous fighting revolutionist, was also a real Georgian, and wanted very much to have the dancer carry off as happy memories of Tiflis under Soviet régime as she had of her previous visit under the Czar. He told Isadora that he would like to take her driving in the country. Next day he arrived at the hotel in a huge government automobile. Following his were other cars in which were other lesser members of the government. When Isadora was at last suitably dressed for the occasion and with a ruddy

scarf that floated behind her, the cars all drove off in the direction of Vlădikavkaz, the famous military highway that goes over the mountain beyond Tiflis.

Lunch was eaten in a funny little inn kept by a fat, good-natured native, who moved among his stacked barrels of new Caucasian wine like a Georgian Bacchus. He waddled from table to table among his distinguished guests, toasted them with deep glasses of his fiery wine, and saw that the *shashlik*, which had been well roasted on long spits over the open fire, was to their taste. When at the end of the repast the fragrant Oriental coffee had been sipped and cigarettes were being puffed, this fat old fellow began to dance. With his dagger between his teeth and an empty wine-bottle balanced on his head, he performed a native dance with such gaiety, grace, and lightsomeness that Isadora, amazed and charmed, loudly called for an encore.

One of the things which had remained quite vivid in Isadora's memories of her previous stay in Tiflis was her visits to the famous hot sulphur baths. Now she went every morning to them and submitted to what seemed to be a veritable ritual with many complicated movements, sounds, and slappings, to say nothing of the frenzied dance of the bath attendant on the back of the weakened bather. After being exhausted and cleansed by

all the poundings, pattings, slappings, scrapings, back-dancings, which were accompanied by weird cries, incantations, chants, the rite ended in a cool quiet room where restoratives in the form of hot meat patties and heady native wine were applied. There was only one difficulty about the business, said Isadora. After losing many pounds under the skilled handling of the bath attendant, she could gain them all back again, and more, by indulging to the full her appetite for the hot meat patties.

In the evenings, with her friends of the government, she loved to go to a little restaurant overhanging the wildly rushing river Kura. There, over a bottle of Kinandaly, they would listen to the native orchestra. While at ordinary times they played mostly dance music and popular songs on their quaint instruments, for Isadora they were always happy to play half-forgotten songs and folk music. She never tired of hearing them ; they played with great charm and variety ; and they never wearied of playing for such an appreciative audience. As she listened, she felt that in that happy land which was supposed to be the cradle of the human race, music and the dance must also surely have had their birth.

The various performances given by Isadora in Tiflis, despite the almost tropical heat, were most successful. After each one, among the crowds that

pressed to see the dancer, there was a most persistent woman. To the secretary she explained that she was the founder and *directrice* of a very flourishing School of Interpretative Dancing and that nothing would please her more than a brief visit from the great Isadora. Both Irma and the secretary tried to explain to the importunate woman that if there was one thing above all else in the world that Madame Duncan loathed with a peculiar loathing it was watching the pupils of any Interpretative Dance School go through their rhythmic movements. She could and did watch with a strange interest the regimental and precise gymnastic movements of various ballet schools, and she found pleasure watching the simple steps of unpretentious folk-dancers. But girls, dressed in sloppy muslin Greek dresses, chasing sunbeams and being girlishly " interpretative " had the power to infuriate her beyond measure.

The dancing teacher, however, who had studied eurhythmics with Dalcroze ; who had taken lessons in " Greek " dancing from one of the other Duncans ; who looked upon Isadora Duncan as the fount of all knowledge and grace, was not so easily put off in her purpose. She was determined to have her idol come and watch the pupils. After vainly trying to break through the barrier raised by the secretary and Irma, with sound feminine intuition she sent her

good-looking young husband to call on the Great One at her hotel.

He was ushered into the room, smiled, explained deferentially that he had a car waiting outside to take Madame Duncan right to the School, where they would all be so happy and honoured, if she could come for even a few minutes. The young man with his twinkling black eyes conquered the dancer. In a few minutes she was dressed, ready to be taken to the Tiflis School of Interpretative Dancing.

In the hall of the Conservatory of Music all the proud parents of the pupils were assembled. They had been told that the celebrated Isadora Duncan would be present to applaud their rhythmic offspring. Perhaps, too, if she were well pleased with the girls, she might take a few of them for her school in Moscow ! As the great dancer sailed into the room smiling her childish-charming smile, all the parents rose from their seats and cheered her. Ushered by the flustered young man, she went down to the front of the stage, where a little child dressed in a neat white tunic presented her with a huge bunch of white and golden roses. She accepted them with smiling thanks and graciously kissed the cheeks of the excited child in the most approved " distinguished visitor " manner. Then she sat down in the seat reserved for her in the middle of the first row.

" We will begin," said the teacher, nervous but radiant with the pride of having finally obtained the presence of the One and Only, " we will begin by showing you some very simple exercises."

She clapped her hands. The curtains opened to the sides of the stage showing a group of solemn Georgian maidens all dressed in white *soi-disant* Greek tunics. At another sign from the teacher in the front row, the pianist began to play the *Valse Triste* of Sibelius. To the thumped out music the girls on the stage wriggled their arms ; as the music grew louder and more insistent, they wriggled their whole bodies in strange, elastic contortions.

When the dance was finished, and all the parents had loudly applauded, Isadora stood up, and walking over to the front of the stage where the perspiring maidens waited for Terpsichore's praises, she laid down her large mortuary bouquet before them, saying :

" I lay these flowers on the grave of my hopes ! "

To the astonished teacher who was mumbling something about " never ought to have shown you just exercises," she said :

" What you are doing is dreadful, dreadful ! Instead of creating something simple and beautiful, you make these girls prostitute movement in vulgar harem dances. Oh, it's terrible ! No ! No ! don't show me any more," she cried to the

protesting teacher, who was saying that she had other dances more to the taste of the August Critic.

And Isadora, all unconscious of the hissing and booing parents and the now red-faced teacher shouting hysterical insults, sailed out as she had sailed in. She was driven back to her hotel in the automobile of the poor cat's-paw husband of the humiliated teacher of interpretative dancing.

Before leaving the enchanting Georgian capital, Isadora went out one day to visit the vast concentration camp for the homeless Armenian children, which was stationed some miles outside Tiflis. Here thousands of these unfortunate young people were being cared for by the efficient members of the American Near East Relief Association. As always, to the great joy of the children, Isadora danced for them a simple dance. Then, through an interpreter, she gave them their first lesson in the dance. Before leaving the camp, she promised she would send a collection of little red dancing tunics such as her children wore in Moscow. These the teachers could give to the girls who danced the best after Isadora was gone.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Caucasian *tournée* ended at Batoum, which lay blistering under the scorching heat of the last days of August. When she arrived at this town, Isadora found that the government had placed at her disposal a beautiful villa perched on a rock overlooking the Black Sea. In this same villa Trotsky had lived during his stay at the port, and before the Revolution it had been the property of a wealthy Frenchman, who had planted the gardens which surrounded the house with a magnificent profusion of European and tropical flora. It was a rocky Eden, but far from the centre of the town ; and when the rainy season began and continued for several days without respite, the place was a very wilderness of desolation.

After the rain had poured down for forty-eight hours, and there was no sign in the heavens or on the barometer of " fair weather," Isadora grew more and more depressed. She wished audibly that she had never left the town ; that she had been a little more *méfiante* of Government hospitality. While the torrential rain still played a

tattoo over her Mount Ararat for the third day, she disappeared; she escaped out of the bookless, depressing house, where there was nothing to do but sit and sit. She packed a little handbag, and running down the steep, winding path among the rocks and along the road that led to the town, she finally found some sort of conveyance that took her to the theatre.

When the rain abated its down-pouring fury, the other guests of the villa went hunting for the escaped guest. In Batoum they found her installed, quite gay and smiling, in the apartment of a young man. He was a Georgian poet and the younger brother of the President of the Tcheka. When Isadora had arrived at the theatre, drenched but happy in her escape from the Ark, he happened to be there. Although he had not understood all she said in her mixture of Russian and German, she had managed to make it clear to him that she had escaped from a Noah's Ark and that she had no intention of going back there.

The young man, charmed to meet such a famous woman, took her to a restaurant and there introduced her to some other flashing-eyed young Georgian poets. Soon they had elected her their Muse, and from the restaurant they escorted her to the young man's apartment, where they installed her. Then they sat outside all night on

the stairs to keep watch over their new Muse. And the next day and the next and until her departure from Batoum, Isadora lived on in the young man's apartment.

During her stay in Batoum, a part of the Black Sea Fleet—a destroyer and a submarine boat—was stationed in the harbour. One day, the government officials called upon Isadora and asked her if she would not like to give a free performance for the commanders and the sailors. Quite gladly she agreed to dance for them, and a matinée was arranged, at which she danced her Tchaikowsky programme ending as usual with the *Internationale*, which the revolutionary, sea-going audience sang as lustily as they knew how.

In the evening, the President of the Georgian Republic, Tovarish Tchichivelli, gave a banquet in honour of the celebrated artist, to which were invited the President of the Tcheka, the various Commissars, the commanders of the Black Sea Fleet, and all the important town officials. In the whole company of men in uniform and men in civilian clothes there were but two women : Isadora and her pupil Irma. After everybody had been toasted, Isadora was called on for a speech. Prompted by that demon of perversity that so often possessed her she said with her sweetest smile :

" I see you are all at the banquet to-night, but

where are your wives, for you do have wives, have you not ? Well, where are they ? "

Had they been courageous they would have replied like the good Orientals most of them were :

" They are where they belong—in the home, or the Harem." But as good communists they had to save their faces, and someone offered as an excuse : " It's summer ; they are all in the country." And the black-eyed Ganymedes at the banquet table smiled knowingly. . . .

Beautiful as the poets of Batoum were and attentive and charming to their chosen Muse, they could not hope to drive from her mind the thought of another poet. Essenine was ever present there. Since the parting at the Kazansky Station she had written him many letters and had telegraphed scores of times without ever drawing from him a reply. So to her bevy of Batoum poets she bade adieu and took the boat to Yalta in the Crimean peninsula. She hoped that Essenine would be more easily enticed there than he had been to the Caucasus—there was a through train from Moscow to Sebastopol. On her arrival, she telegraphed to the errant poet-husband, asking him to join her at Yalta. A reply was not long in arriving. It read :

" Moscow 9-X-23.

" Don't send any more letters telegrams

Essenine he is with me and won't join you must count on his not returning to you.

"GALINA BENISLAVSKAYA."

This reply made Isadora furious. She wanted to rush right back to Moscow. Her friends, however, persuaded her to rest calmly by the shores of the Black Sea and send another telegram saying :

" Your servant tells me you have left your old lodgings. Telegraph new address immediately. Isadora."

But had she known then what she learned later, she would not have troubled sending such a telegram. The woman Benislavskaya had not sent the first telegram. Essenine, for reasons best known to himself, had written it out and signed it with her name. She was nowhere near him at the moment !

So Isadora, after a few days spent in Yalta, went back again to Moscow. There she tried her best to see the recalcitrant poet. He was nowhere to be found, either at his former lodgings or in his old café haunts along the Twerskaya ; none of his friends seemed to know what had become of him, or if they did know, they were chary about imparting their knowledge to the seeker of it. It was not until some time later that he turned up at 20 Pretchistenka. He was in such condition,

however, and caused such a scandal, that his friend, the Secretary of the School, put him out of the house and later wrote him a letter wherein he said among other things :

" . . . Don't you think it is bad taste to scream in Isadora's room in front of people about your love for another woman and how you have made two others *enceinte* ? What will people think of you who hear such talk ? Isadora's only fault is that she had been too good to you. You have behaved yourself like a swine. How often have you told me how much you loved Isadora, but your first deed when you returned to Moscow was to insult her by publishing a love poem addressed to another woman . . .

" You scream everywhere that Isadora had you put in an insane asylum. I have seen the bill, which proves that it was simply a first class sanitorium where you were. Do you think an insane asylum would have permitted you to leave any time you wanted ? That sanitorium, which cost Isadora a lot of money, saved you from the police and deportation.

" On the Place de l'Opéra you hit a French policeman. If it had not been for Isadora's influence and protection, you would have sat in prison many months. Isadora protected you everywhere, and I have seen the most beautiful articles written by her in your defence. On your

account she forfeited her American passport, and with what sacrifice and under what terrible difficulties did she take you to France, Italy, and America. And you in your own country have only repaid her with vile actions. I can see very well what Isadora has done for you, but I do not see what your so-called "love" has done for her. I see only shame and lies coming from you, and after the scandal of last night, I can only tell you that I do not want to see you again . . ."

Some time later, one afternoon when Isadora sat in her room with some callers, Essenine came again to demand his bust. He demanded it loudly and instantly, and finally forced his drunken way into the room. The bust, which Konienkoff had genially hacked out of a huge block of wood, stood atop a high bric-à-brac cabinet in one corner of the room. When Isadora refused to give him the bust and asked him to come back again some time when he was more fit to carry it away, he dragged a chair over to the corner and with shaky legs mounted it. As he reached the bust with his feverish hands and clasped it, its weight proved too much for him. He staggered and fell from the chair, rolling head over heels on the floor, still clasping tightly to his breast his wooden image. Sullenly and shakily he rose to his feet ; and then reeled out

of the room to wander later about the byways of Moscow and lose the encumbering bust in some gutter.

That was the last view that Isadora Duncan had of her poet and husband, Sergei Alexandrovitch Essenine.

In November of 1923, the first Octobrina Christening took place. To make the ceremony of this civil and revolutionary baptism as imposing as possible, it was decided to hold it in a theatre. The organisers, after having asked two of the most famous women communists to speak—Clara Zetkin, the veteran German revolutionist, and Alexandra Kollantai, the elegant novelist and ambassadress—thought that the solemn occasion demanded more than words to make it memorable.

One of the organisers was from Tiflis, and remembered what Isadora Duncan had said on the occasion of the taking over of the Cathedral there to house a revolutionary club : " You cannot take away religion from the people without giving them something in return. Give me the cathedral instead of turning it over to a club. I will devise a series of beautiful musical festivals. With lovely music and noble movements, I will make ceremonies for births, ceremonies for marriage, and ceremonies for the passing away of

human life. If you must take away the religious ceremonies, let me with my music and my dance substitute something as beautiful as the rites of ancient Greece."

So Isadora Duncan was invited to lend her art to grace the historic ceremony of the first revolutionary christening. The idea pleased her enormously, and without any thought of the Communist party's repudiation of God and their abhorrence of the mummery of religion, she decided to dance to the music of Schubert's "Ave Maria."

The ceremony was a great success. Mesdames Zetkin and Kollantai orated fervently and at length. Isadora, surrounded by the little red angels of her school, danced a lovely poem of divine motherhood to the strains of the Schubertian hymn. The only marring feature was the fainting away of the septuagenarian Frau Zetkin. She was quickly revived, however, by a glass of Isadora's champagne.

"It was the lovely Tovarish Duncan who sent you this," said one of the girls who held the glass from which the weak old lady sipped the champagne.

"Ach so! You must go thank her for this charged water! It has so refreshed me."

CHAPTER XXIX

With Essenine completely out of her life, Isadora settled down to a period of tranquillity in the school. She gave lessons to the children, read much, and even thought of writing her memoirs. A few manuscript pages, apparently written out at one sitting, are still preserved in the school. We reprint the manuscript here as it is, unchanged and uncorrected, save for a few punctuation marks.

" Like the family of the Atrides there are strains of blood whose life seems continuously enveloped in tragedy.

" The Gods sell their gifts dearly. For every joy there is a corresponding agony. For what they give of Fame, Wealth, Love, they exact Blood and Tears and grinding Sorrow. I am continually surrounded by flames.

" My first recollection—a clear sensual remembrance of being thrown from a burning window to the arms of a policeman, and I hear the shrieks of my mother : ' My boys, my boys. Let me go back for them.' Often at night I hear the

voice of my father shouting : ' Courage ! They will come to save us.' He met his death clinging to the seat of an overturned row-boat in the wild waves off the rocks of Falmouth. Always fire and water and sudden fearful death.

" Of my childhood entire memories stand out with extraordinary vividness ; the rest is enclosed in darkness.

" My mother raised four children by the precarious profession of music teaching. Her continually bothered and anxious face was so familiar to us ; we lived in a perpetual state of terror lest we hear the rat-ta-tat of disagreeable landlords on the door, asking for the rent, and in a continual changing of address from one lodging or small cottage to another.

" I remember all through my childhood a distinct feeling of the general unpleasantness of life as being a normal condition. And a continual going to school with leaking shoes and unsatisfied stomach made learning impossible.

" I remember once, when I was about eight years old, the teacher asked each child for a story of their short lives. The other children's consisted of accounts of gardens, of toys, of pet dogs, etc. Mine ran somewhat as follows :

" ' First we lived at 23rd Street in East Oakland. The man kept asking for the rent, until we moved to a small house on 17th Street. But again

we were not allowed long to remain. In three months we moved to two small rooms on Sunpath Avenue. As Mama could not take the furniture, we only had one large bed for all. But again the unkind landlord became disagreeable, and we moved to . . . etc., etc. This continued through fifteen moves in two years.'

" The teacher thought I was playing a bad joke on her and summoned my mother to appear before the board of directors. When my mother read the ' life ' she burst into tears and said that I had written only the truth. I remember her eyes were red for days afterwards, and I could not understand. The state in which we lived, continually hunted, had seemed to me the normal thing. I think that is why I have worked in the interest of Government feeding and education and general welfare of children.

" My mother not only taught music but knitted caps, jackets, etc., for the big stores. I remember often waking at dawn and seeing my mother still knitting. What a life for her ! The only bright spots were when she had a piano and would play for hours—Beethoven, Schubert, Mozart, Schumann ; or she would read aloud to us from Shelley, Burns, Keats, many poems which she taught us to recite by heart. She taught us children to listen curled up on the rug at her feet.

" At that time my mother was still young and beautiful, but, cursed with the narrow bourgeois principles, she did not know how to use either her Youth or Beauty or indomitable intelligence or strength. She was in the prison house of the days before the Emancipation of Women. Sentimental and virtuous, she could only suffer and weep, and young as we were, we too suffered, each in our way, and our pillows were often wet with the tears of children who go to bed hungry.

" This is the Christian education which does not know how to teach to children Nietzsche's superb phrase : ' Be hard ! ' Only from an early age some spirit kept whispering to me to ' be hard.'

" I remember coming in one day and finding mother crying on the bed and sobbing her heart out. About her were lying all the knitted things of a week's work, which she had not been able to sell at the stores. A sudden revolt possessed me. I decided I would sell these things for mother and at a good price. I put on one of the little red knitted capes and caps, and with the rest in a basket I set forth. From house to house I peddled my wares. Some people were kind, others rude. On the whole I had success, but it was the first awakening in my childish breast of the monstrous injustice of the world. And that little red knitted cap that my mother had made was the cap of a Baby Bolshevik."

In the beginning of 1924, there came to the school a musician named Zinoviev. He was most anxious to arrange a tour for Isadora. The winter months of inaction had weighed heavily on her, and she was only too glad to consent to the young man's proposals. Having discussed terms, he went off to the Ukraine to visit the various towns there and make the preliminary arrangements. But just as he had mapped out the itinerary and made bookings in most of the places he had visited, Lenin died. The Government ordered a period of two weeks of national mourning, and the tour had to be postponed for the time being.

Isadora, although she had never come into actual contact with the great leader, was profoundly moved by his death. Accompanied by a friend, she stood in line with the peasants and workers and waited in the snow for hours outside the Union House, before passing into the great hall where the body lay in state. The cold was of such an intensity that the ear of her companion was nipped off. She herself was almost petrified by the long, icy wait. But the sight of the hundreds of thousands of grief-stricken people who filed past the exposed body day and night made a profound impression on her. Her emotions were crystallised in the creation of two funeral marches for Lenin. These she composed to well-known songs ; the first to the music of

Lenin's favourite revolutionary hymn, and the second to the *Funeral Song for the Revolutionary Heroes* which the red sailors had once sung so splendidly for her in Petrograd. At all her performances afterwards, she danced these two funeral compositions, and always with a tremendous effect upon her various audiences.

The period of mourning over, Isadora and Zinoviev started out on her Ukrainian tour. The first performances were given at Kharkov, and were opened with the two funeral dances for Lenin—their first public performance. Isadora had an overwhelming success which augured well for her future Ukrainian recitals. And indeed, in every town she appeared in, her success with the music-loving Ukrainians was swift and prolonged.

In Kiev, the ancient capital of the Ukraine and one of the oldest cities in Russia, her success was unprecedented. In that town of about 500,000 inhabitants, she gave eighteen consecutive evenings with the theatre crowded each evening. Never, even in Paris, had she ever danced so many times in succession. On the streets she was hailed and cheered by the people. The beggars followed her about crying : " Duncan, Duncan, Beautiful Lady, give us bread ! " And Isadora, like a queen, scattered largesse in the form of copper kopecks. She had a theory that one must never knowingly

incur a beggar's curse. So each day, as she went walking or riding, she saw to it that her bag had a sufficient quantity of copper coins. One day as the beggars crowded about the restaurant where she was dining, she ordered the waiter to give all the snivelling, whining army, plates of *bortsh*. After that she was never rid of them. And when she was billed to appear in Kiev a few months later, the town beggars and all their relations were on hand at the railway station to welcome her with cheers for " Duncan, Duncan, Beautiful Lady."

CHAPTER XXX

In April of 1924, Isadora Duncan returned to Moscow, looking more beautiful than she had ever looked since her first arrival in Russia. A diet consisting exclusively of fresh caviar, broiled and roast chicken, and champagne, and the continued physical exercise of dancing a whole programme almost every night were all responsible for the loss of about thirty pounds. Her tour had been an enormous success, and it didn't much matter, she said, if there were no great financial results to show for it. But money or no money, she could not remain inactive, feeling in such fine condition. All the lost thirty pounds would come swiftly back again with each day of inaction and each meal of potatoes.

So she badgered her secretary, until he finally went to Leningrad to try to arrange performances there. Without waiting for results, she followed on his heels and took a princely suite at the famous Hôtel de l'Europe, where she had already stayed on her honeymoon with Essenine in 1922, and where she had also been an honoured and elegant guest during her former visits before the

Revolution. The hotel had not suffered much under the Soviet régime, the wine cellar was practically intact, and many of the waiters were still at their old posts. One old *maître d'hôtel*, remembering the dancer from her previous munificence, hovered around obsequiously to serve her every want; her like was so seldom seen in these later communistic days.

Isadora, with her usual superb unconcern about the cost of things and with her usual unrestrained generosity, entertained all her old and new friends in the enormous salon of her suite. Count Alexei Tolstoy came there with Schelgelov, with whom he was collaborating on a play about Nicholas and Rasputin. The well-known concert pianist, Arthur Schnabel, and Malko, the conductor of the Leningrad Philharmonic, were both frequent visitors, as was Klouief, the poet and master of Essenine. The director of the Kamerny Theatre of Moscow and many of the leading actors, poets, painters and musicians were always to be found in the Salon. No evening passed without some friends or simple acquaintances sitting down with Isadora and her retinue to the well-garnished table, at whose side stood the silver champagne cooler—quite like the pre-revolutionary days.

During the month of May, one concert was arranged with the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra, and a second was booked for the week

following. In the interval, however, the impresario had managed to "sell" Isadora to a small provincial town about 700 kilometres from Leningrad.

In order to reach this town of Witepsk, which was off the main line, it was necessary to take a night train, making stops at each station along the way. This local also had the further disadvantage of having only hard wooden seats and a collection of uninteresting odours.

When she heard the details of the journey to this far-away provincial town, where she was booked to give two performances, Isadora refused to leave the cosy comforts of her suite for the hardships of third-class night travelling. The reiterated fact that the first of the two concerts she was to give was already sold out did not influence her in the least. The manager was frantic ; he had already spent most of the *tchervonetz* which he had received in advance. To all his tearful pleadings Isadora replied : " I couldn't dream of going in a hard wagon. Get me an automobile, and I will consider the journey ! "

The railroads in Russia are certainly not of the best or the most up-to-date, but what can be said of the highways of that ravaged country ? And automobiles to run on even these ill-kept highways were as scarce as hansom cabs on the streets of a modern city. But, after scouring the

town, the manager, reduced to almost gibbering hysteria, finally found a " private automobile " whose owner consented for a fair price, to take the dancer and her accompanist to Witepsk. He was very proud of his machine, for he had just spent forty *tchervonetz* on it, having it repaired, renovated, and repainted.

As the driver and his car stood outside the main door of the Hôtel de l'Europe waiting for his distinguished passenger, the crowd collected to look at the pre-war mechanical relic. It had no doubt been the height of vehicular elegance a decade before, but the war and the revolution had done things to it, and the patchy and inadequate repairs only added to the drollness of its aspect. As for the owner of this perambulating junk-wagon, he sat unsteadily at the wheel and looked as though he had been fed on the spirits intended for his antique motor.

With no less nobility and dignified grace than a queen going for a ceremonial drive in the gilded coach of state, Isadora stepped into the car, and after her pianist and all the baggage had been piled in, the car clattered and chugged off to Witepsk. Many, many hours later, without as much as a tin patch coming loose or a connecting wire becoming undone, they all reached the little town. The two performances were a tremendous success financially and artistically, and the car

had, as Isadora said later, " *un aussi grand succès de curiosité que moi-même.*"

On the return journey, however, the tragedy happened. Isadora had quite leisurely stayed in Witepsk until the last moment without much thought of the performance she was to give in Leningrad. But once in the car going towards the capital, and with no thought of its age and worn condition, she urged the driver to be more reckless. The road was clear even though it was not straight, and she was in a hurry to get back to Leningrad. The driver, with the honour of his machine at stake, grew reckless, and the motor became hot. After bumping along for a few versts at its top speed, the thing broke in two. The front part with the driver turned somersault. The back half with the occupants was hurled over into a ditch. Pinned down under the luggage, the two passengers lay stunned.

Recounting the incident on her return to Leningrad, Isadora said :

" I was at first in a daze and told myself that this must surely be the end ! I have always believed that my end would come in a motor accident. For a while I lay with the most unearthly stillness all about me. Then I felt something struggling beside me and realised that I had come out alive.

" No one was hurt ; not even the driver, who

seemed to have turned somersault. When I finally managed to push all the luggage off my body and struggle out of the ditch, I was concerned not so much about my possible injuries and bruises as about our impossible position. There we were in the middle of uninhabited fields, miles from any place or railway station. I turned on the chauffeur in anger, thinking that his being drunk had caused the accident. But he, poor fellow, was quite sober—may be from the shock —and he was not to blame. Terribly bruised and scratched, he sat by the roadside crying like a child over a broken mechanical toy. Over and over again he sobbed out : ' My forty *tchervonetz !* Oh, my forty *tchervonetz !* '

" For a while we stood helplessly in the middle of the road, looking at each other, quite at a loss what to do next. Finally in one hand I took my suitcase, from the pile of luggage in the ditch, and with the other I clasped the hand of the still dazed pianist and started off along the road to look for help. We left the broken-hearted chauffeur still sobbing among the débris. When we had walked a few miles, we met a peasant in a rumbling cart, coming towards us. We hailed him, and after telling him what had happened, we arranged with him to take us, the luggage, and the chauffeur to the nearest railway station, Pskoff. There all I could do was to send a

telegram, since there was no train until midnight. The peasant, with true Russian hospitality, invited us to his *isba*, and we sat with him around the samovar until the train left for Leningrad . . ."

The concert, naturally, had to be cancelled and the ticket money returned to the already assembled public that filled the hall impatiently awaiting the rise of the curtain.

A few days later, Isadora, all bruises, and much poorer than she was before, left Leningrad. Behind her, as a token of her happy stay in the Hôtel de l'Europe, she left an uncancelled note that seemed to her intimates like the war debt of one of the lesser powers.

CHAPTER XXXI

It was already June when Isadora returned to Moscow again, and the children of the School were preparing for their summer holidays. Her lack of success in Leningrad forced Isadora to try to think of some way to rehabilitate her own finances as well as those of the School. Recalling her profitable tour in the Ukraine earlier in the year, she decided that it might be worth while to take a group of the most talented children of the School and, starting at Kiev, do some of the lesser Ukrainian towns not previously visited.

The first performance of this *tournée* was given at the Grand Theatre of Kiev. Isadora gave a lecture in German, which was translated, and the children illustrated it by various movements and ended the performance with a series of dances led by Irma. This mixture of lecture and dance did not appeal to the concert-goers of Kiev. They had already seen Isadora dance more beautifully and youthfully alone than all her pupils put together. Other performances were then tried in the open air with full orchestral accompaniment. Isadora, in these performances, would

dance the first part of the programme alone—usually her Wagnerian compositions—and in the second part Irma with the girls would do their Brahms and Schubert waltzes. After two weeks in Kiev it was discovered that the financial condition of the School was no better than it had been. Most of the money earned went to pay the expenses of the orchestra and the hotel bills.

With the fares borrowed from the G.P.U., Isadora sent the children back to Moscow with Irma ; and then made arrangements with Zinoviev, her impresario, to continue the tour alone in the hope of making some money. They planned to take along a concert pianist and try to do the Volga district, Turkestan, the Urals, and perhaps Siberia and China. It seemed, on paper, a most perfect arrangement. For with the terrific expenses of the orchestra cut off, and the feeding and housing of fifteen children no longer an item in the budget, with the route laid over new towns, where no doubt her fame had preceded her, surely some money could be made to replenish the privy purse and the School exchequer.

The children, who had gone back to Moscow with Irma, having no country place to go to for the summer, decided to organise classes for the city children. These were given in the big sports

IRMA DUNCAN, MOSCOW, 1927.

stadium at Sparrow Hills which Comrade Podvowsky, Isadora's old friend, presided over. The pupils were dressed in short red tunics and were taught the Duncan system of exercises and some of the simpler dances. They romped about in the sun singing their revolutionary songs, and from pale sallow children of the city streets they grew during the summer months to happy, sunburnt, and healthy dancing humans.

Meanwhile, Isadora continued on her tour with Mark Metchick the pianist and Zinoviev her manager. The trio went from misfortune to catastrophe. Of this lamentable *tournée*, it is perhaps best to let the dancer speak through the various letters written to Irma in Moscow. The first is dated from Samara in the Volga district :

" Samara, *June 20th*, '*24*.

" Dear Irma,

" Where is Saturn ? Here is more catastrophe. We can't get from one town to another ! ! ! and the curtains have not arrived. I have given three horrible performances before grey scenery and *white* lights. And we have not a kopeck. We leave this Volga, which I prefer to remember from a distance. No public, no comprehension—Nothing. Boats frightfully crowded with screaming children and chattering women. Three in a cabin, second class. Every corner taken in first. I sat on

deck all night and enjoyed *some* quiet hours of moonlit beauty, quite *alone*. But the rest—nightmare ! !

" We leave to-night for Orenburg. No news of curtains. Telegraph and enquire for them. Then to Tashkent. Send me books and papers and write me news. How is the divine Comrade Podvowsky ?

" This journey is a *Calvaire*. Heat terrific, almost dead. Give my love to Dr. and Mrs. Hammer. How do things progress ? Much love to you and love to the children.

" Yours in unholy martyrdom,

" POOR ISADORA."

" Hell of a life, anyway."

" Orenburg, *June 24th, 1924*.

" DEAREST IRMA,

" We sent you letters and three telegrams without answer. Just received word the curtains arrived only to-day in Kazan ! ! ! Too late to take them to Tashkent. We leave at six to-morrow. Heaven knows for what, but keep hoping. Have about fifty kopecks in the *caisse*. *Please* telegraph and write me to Tashkent. One feels so cut off from the world and all these towns so *small*, ruined, and God forlorn. I am almost at the last gasp. Dancing in white lights without décors. The public understands nothing at all.

" To-day I visited the children's colony and gave them a dancing lesson. Their life and enthusiasm is touching—all orphans.

" Darling is really an angel, never loses his temper in most trying circumstances and always keeps smiling although there is not a penny to pay expenses. Have found no woman and no one to help at theatre—very trying. Well, love to you. For Heaven's sake telegraph me news.

" With all my good wishes and love to the children,

" ISADORA."

" Samarkand, *The end of June.*

" DEAREST IRMA,

" We go from one catastrophe to another. Arrived in Tashkent without a kopeck. Found theatre full of Geltzer, Hotel full of Geltzer, whole town occupied. We had to go to an awful hotel where they demanded ' dingy ' in advance and, failing, would not even give us a samovar. We wandered round the town *without even a cup of tea* all day. In the evening we went to see Geltzer dance to a packed house ! After a second hungry day Darling pawned his valise with two costumes for just enough to come here. And who do you think he pawned it to ? Why, Kalovsky, who is now Geltzer's official husband.

" We arrived here also without a kopeck. The

baggage went by mistake to another station. However, here is no Geltzer, it is more hopeful. I dance here Thursday, but it seems, though very beautiful, only a big village. So Heaven knows what will be the result or whether we will be able to leave ! ! !

" I feel a bit dilapidated. Metchick is gone in a hopeless melancholy, and even Darling has lost his sweet smiling nonchalance.

" The country here is divine, fruits and trees and all like a garden—very hot but lovely. But it's a terrible sensation to *walk* about without a penny. Kiev was a prosperous exploit in comparison. The *Tovarish* that brings this note saved our lives by giving us his room and sleeping in his private car. So be very nice to him.

" Telegraph me news and letters to Tashkent until July 15th. *Poste restante.*

" There are marvellous things here to buy, but *hélas* ! The land seems a veritable paradise—for the natives. The whites don't understand how to live here.

" Well, we're hoping for better luck. So far the tour is a tragedy. Why did we leave Friday the 13th ?

" Please send me news and papers if possible, I don't know what is going to happen to us next. At any rate, I've grown very thin. Think of the lovely meals we ate at Kiev ! ! !

" Much love to you. This is really a fearful situation. Is Yashenka still in Tashkent? If so telegraph me his exact address. We could not find him. If any money comes, telegraph it me. It is five days from here to Moscow and for us all it will cost forty *tchervonetz*, with baggage, fifty. We may have to stay here for ever. Telegraph me news on receiving this. With love to the children and all friends.

" ISADORA."

" Tashkent, *July 10th, 1924.*

" DEAREST IRMA,

" Thank you very much for your very beautiful letter. I can quite understand how you feel. Blazing sun and prize-fighters are far from my vision of a *Ninth Symphony* to be danced in a golden light of the intellectual radiance. But probably you are digging the foundations on which the future columns will stand. At any rate, if it is only to take off these horrible clothes and give the children of the new world red tunics, it is a great work. Go on with it. Surely when the government sees that this new dance has the sympathy of the working people, it will do something for the school. As for Podvowsky's ideas of dance—our dance will sweep them away, as it sweeps everything away that stands in its road.

" This *tournée* is a continual catastrophe. We

arrived again from Samarkand here without a kopeck. Again no hotel. Spent two days wandering round the streets very hungry. Zeno and Metchick slept in the theatre. I, next door in a little house without water or toilet. Finally we found rooms in this fearful hotel over-run with vermin. We are so bitten as to appear to have some sort of illness.

" Yesterday Zeno arranged on percentage an evening for the students, and they advanced ten *tchervonetz*, so we went to a restaurant and ate, first time in three days. The theatre is engaged. The first performance can only be given next Wednesday. Heaven knows what we will do until then. I only hope we can make enough for the train.

" The country is marvellous. I have never seen flowers and fruit in such abundance. In Samarkand we saw the old temple, composed of Chinese, Persian, and Arab culture ; wonderful mosaics. And I visited the tomb of Tamerlaine and the old Sartian town. If one had money there are ravishing scarves and silks, but *hélas* ! ! !

" All this discomfort and worry has made us all ill. Poor Metchick looks dying. We arrived early in the morning and had to sit all day on park benches with nothing to eat. It's a horrid sensation. But this is a primitive, wild place, and anything can happen to one. It's the sort of place

to come with Lohengrin and his millions ; very like Egypt. The heat is forty degrees more in the shade, and flies, bugs, mosquitoes make life unbearable.

" The little photos are amusing. Try and send me some good ones of you and the children.

" Courage ; it's a long way, but light is ahead. My art was the flower of an epoch, but that epoch is dead and Europe is the past. These red tunicked kids are the future. So it is fine to work for them. Plough the ground, sow the seed, and prepare for the next generation that will express the new world. What else is there to do ? Give my love to I. and to the divine Podvowsky and to all friends. . . .

" Love to the children. All my love to you. You are my only disciple and with you I see the Future. It is *there*—and we will dance the *Ninth Symphony* yet.

" With love.

" ISADORA."

" Tashkent, *Monday, July 19th, 1924.*

" DEAR IRMA,

" In fifty degrees heat and half the time without eats in a fearful room. The hotel is called Turzika ! It ought to be called Wanzens Home.[1] I think my last hour is come. Metchick was a gay

[1] Bed-bug's Home.

and wild Lothario when you knew him, compared to what he is now. He spends his time trotting ten miles to the *poste restante* where he receives hourly telegrams for help from his starving wife. Can't you give the poor thing a bit of bread ? Darling also receiving a lot of starving telegrams, has settled into a fearful gloom. I spend my nights in feverish bed-bug hunts and listening to the dogs howl. *C'est très amusante.*

" Wednesday is the first performance but—no sale. Darling says it's because I wear a funny hat. But I think the natives here are petrified with the heat. How we are ever going to return I don't know. The second-class fare and baggage to Ekaterinburg costs fifty *tchervonetz ! ! !*

" Received your telegram to-day only to find that Yashenka is in Moscow ! ! For God's sake find him and make him telegraph us money to return. We came here because Zeno has an idiot for an advance man, who telegraphed us that prospects here were ' brilliant.' He must have been hired by the ballet to bring us to ruin. When you have an inspiration to save us, for Heaven's sake act on it for it is the last moment.

" Please search for all these writs, *huissier* papers, etc., and send them to Raymond. I think of them when I can't sleep nights. But they are not among the papers I have here.

" I keep on making jokes which are not appreciated ; but it's my Irish way.

" Well, farewell.

" This is probably my last gasp.

" With all my love to everyone.

" Poor Isadora."

" Ekaterinburg, *July 28th, 1924.*

" Dear Irma,

" We arrived here more dead than alive after *five nights* on the R.R., twice changing trains and waiting all day in villages without hotels. The last day and night third class on account of lack of funds. The money for the trip borrowed last moment from the government. We waited in vain for the money I. said had come from Paris.

" This *tournée* is one calamity after another, for although I dance to large publics of communists and workmen, no one has money to buy tickets except the *new bourgeoisie*, and they cordially detest me. When we have a little money, Metchick takes it all on the pretext that he will not *play* unless he receives all the money at once. And after that he calmly sits by and watches us starve. He is a wonderful '*tovarish*' and ought to be sent to *Narimsky Kriem.*[1]

" I have no books or papers. I had hoped you would send some here. Why do you not send us

[1] The place in Siberia where all speculators and crooks were sent.

news ? We read in the newspaper that the Soviet Government is now handsomely supporting the School. Is that true ?

" Well, we hope Siberia may turn out better. Volga and Turkestan are countries to be avoided.

" With love to all, in haste. " ISADORA.

" Have you received all my letters ? This is number five or six. Only just received your letter. Many thanks. Will answer to-morrow."

" Ekaterinburg, *4-8-24*.

" DEAREST IRMA,

" The moment I received your letter I sent you a forty word telegram expressing my willingness to *sign at once*, and travel anywhere away from here ! ! ! I still await anxiously the answer. You have no idea what a living nightmare is until you see this town. Perhaps the killing here of a *certain* family in a cellar has cast a sort of Edgar Allen Poe gloom over the place—or perhaps it was always like that. The melancholy church bells ring every hour, fearful to hear. When you go in the streets the *gitan* yells ' *Prava* ' or ' *Lieva* ' and points his gun at you. No one seems to have any sense of humour whatever.

" The head of the communists said, ' How could Metchick play such disgusting music as Liszt or Wagner ! ! ! ' Another said : ' I did not at all understand the *Internationale* ! ! ! '

" Our two performances were a *four noire*,[1] and, as usual, we are stranded and don't know where to go. There is no restaurant here, only ' common eating-houses ' and no coiffeur. The only remaining fossil of that name, while burning my hair off with trembling fingers, assured me there was not one *dama* left here—they shot 'em All.

" We saw the house and the cellar where they shot a *certain* family. Its psychosis seems to pervade the atmosphere. You can't imagine anything more fearful.

" Metchick takes a box of veronal an hour and is sunk in an ' *Ewigen schlaf*.'[2] Darling rushes from one bureau to another in search of dingy only to learn that *they* don't like me at all, and don't approve of me. In fact this town is as near Hell as anything I have ever met.

" Your letter sounds too good to be true. Telegraph us some dingy and I will come at once to Moscow and sign, sign, sign. We have not a kopeck ! And don't know where we're going next.

" With love to you.

" ISADORA."

" Vyatka, *August 12th, 1924.*

" DEAREST IRMA,

"We were twelve days in that awful Ekaterinburg.

[1] Failure. [2] Eternal sleep.

Zeno gave 40 *tchervonetz* from the first concert to a man to book Siberia ! The man departed with forty *tchervonetz* and telegraphed that Siberia was in ruins—no season—no public, etc. The man then returned, but without a *kopeck* ! ! ! What had he done with the 40 *tchervonetz?* He said he sent it to his wife who needed it. I give this *tournée* for the benefit of other people's wives. Wonderful !

" When I. sent the ten *tchervonetz*, we gave eight to the hotel, and *two* brought us as far as Perm. In Perm we did not make expenses ; and arrived here without a kopeck. This is a village with *awful* hotel. Bed-bugs, mice, and other agreements. The Savoy *first evening* was a *palais de luxe* in comparison. It is too awful. I haven't a bottle of eau-de-cologne, no soap nor tooth-paste since a month. The beds are made of *boards* and populated. The stains and pistol shots in the mirror. *C'est très amusante.* My hair is quite white from lack of henna shampoo and I feel extremely *kaput.*

" We telegraphed frantically for news of your contract but received no reply. The red curtains, on account of being packed wet, are quite grey with mildew and all falling to pieces, impossible to use them.

" With love to the children and love to you,

" *Sterbende*[1] ISADORA."

[1] Dying.

CHAPTER XXXII

In the middle of August, Isadora returned to Moscow to sign the contract for the German tour which Irma and her friends had arranged for her in her absence. The children who had been taught all through the summer in the sports arena were told of her return, and they massed themselves on the Pretchistenka Street outside the house. When Isadora drove up from the station, she was taken into the house to the balcony of the grand salon. From there she looked down on the mass of red tunicked children —over five hundred of them. They cheered her, and she smiled back and waved her red scarf to them. Then the band struck up the *Internationale*, and all the children danced past the balcony, each one holding high the hand of the comrade in front.

Isadora wept to see them. She said to those who stood by her : " What do all my hardships matter after this ; these half a thousand children dancing and singing in the open air with fine, free movements ? "

After the children had marched away to their

daily lesson at Sparrow Hills, Isadora could not remain in the school to rest. She followed them to the fields, where they again marched and danced for her. Each day thereafter for the remaining days of August she went out to the arena to teach the happy children. She was thrilled with the progress they had made, and when she returned home one evening she sat down to write an article which she hoped some English or American paper would publish :

"DANCING IN THE RED STADIUM

" This summer the children of my school who have lived and studied here for three years under the most difficult circumstances, enduring cheerfully a life of hardships, held a meeting and decided that, in spite of the fact that they have no material wealth of any sort, they were rich. So rich that they felt the need to give to others of their treasure.

" They decided that they would call a meeting of a hundred children of workers, and teach them the art which had given themselves a new Life and Beauty. The meeting took place on the great sports ground of the Red Stadium, at whose head is the Comrade Podvowsky. With the help of the Comrade Podvowsky these classes were organised, and every afternoon of the last three

months of this summer our brave little class of forty have taught hundreds of children to dance.

" Children who come to the first meeting pale and weak, who could at first hardly walk or skip or raise their arms to the sky, have become transformed under the influence of the air, the sunshine, the music, and the joy of dancing, taught to them by the young pioneers.

" Their costume is a simple red tunic, without sleeves, and ending above the knees. I watched these hundreds of children dancing ; sometimes they resembled a field of red poppies swaying in the wind. At other times, seeing them rushing forward together, one perceived that they were a band of young warriors and amazons ready to do battle for the Ideals of the New World. But the best of all was the enthusiasm and happiness of the children themselves. How they loved to throw themselves heart and soul into these beautiful movements ; and when song was added to the dancing, it seemed that their entire being was lifted in exaltation of the complete and joyous rhythm of youth.

" Movement is a language even as powerful and expressive as words. I could not explain my lessons in words to these children, but I spoke to them by the language of movement and they by their responsive movement showed me that they understood.

" ' Children, place your hands here, as I do, on your breasts ; feel the life within you. This movement means *Man.*' The children answered in chorus : ' *Chelovek.*' ' And now raise the arms slowly upwards and outwards to the heavens. This movement means *Universe.*' The children chorused : ' *Vyselenaia.*' ' Now let your hands fall slowly downwards to the earth.' And the chorus responded : ' *Semlia.*' ' Now hold your hands towards me in love and this means *comrade.*' Chorus : ' *Tovarish.*' "

In a letter sent to Dougie in Paris she also spoke of the children in the Stadium.

" Moscow, *Sept. 2, 1924.*

" Dear Dougie,

" Thank you so much for your letter. No one ever writes to me, and I seldom write because I never have money (' dingy ' it is called here) for a stamp !

" The tenant of my house, 103 Rue de la Pompe, never sends me the rent, and here it is almost impossible to make a penny.

" I have just returned from a three months *tournée* from Samargant, Turkestan to Ekaterinburg. The houses were packed, but the audiences all insisted upon coming *free*, saying as I was a communist I should dance for all comrades—

which I would be very pleased to do. But the result was we were stranded in almost every town without the R.R. fare to proceed to the next.

" Here we have forty children. They dance beautifully, but they are almost always hungry. However, they have great spirit. They live on *kascha* and black bread, but when they dance you would swear that they were fed on ambrosia.

" This summer they went out to the Stadium and taught five hundred children of Trotsky's men to dance in the open air—it was a beautiful sight to see them all in their red tunics and red scarves, dancing and singing the *Internationale.*

" Everyone can say what they please, in spite of the catastrophe and suffering and all, the *idea* of the New World is born here, and nothing can kill it.

" I may see you soon if a contract I am now negotiating for Europe goes through. I will be in Berlin by the end of September.

" Give my love to all friends and much love to you from ever your friend and comrade

" ISADORA.

" You will be pleased to hear that I have not seen the turbulent Essenine since a year."

During her visits to the Sports Arena, Isadora noticed that the children, like their older comrades, the soldiers, always marched to and from

the grounds to the tune of revolutionary songs sung in chorus. The thought came to her that she might compose dances to the tunes and have the children dance them just as they now danced the *Internationale*, singing at the same time the words their movements expressed.

One afternoon, in a burst of inspiration, she accordingly composed seven dances to the various popular revolutionary songs sung daily by the soldiers and children.

(1) *With Courage Comrades March in Step.*
(2) *One, Two, Three, Pioneers Are We.*
(3) *The Young Guard.*
(4) *The Blacksmith.* (Or Forging the Keys of Freedom.)
(5) *Dubinushka.* (A Work Song.)
(6) *The Warshavianka.* (In Memory of 1905.)
(7) *The Young Pioneers.*

These dances, which, with the two funeral dances for the memory of Lenin, the girls of the Isadora Duncan School in Moscow have since danced all over Russia, across Siberia, and in the larger towns of China, are amazing in their effects on the audience. Quite apart from their revolutionary significance, they are all imbued with a real plastic beauty. Several of them, *The Blacksmith*, *Dubinushka*, and *The Warshavianka*,

are choreographic *chefs d'œuvres*. They rank with the great dancer's compositions to the waltzes of Schubert and Brahms, and the various choral dances which she arranged for her presentations of Gluck's *Orpheus* and his *Iphigenia*.

It is a shameful thing to think that at the so-called Memorial Festival arranged by the family and friends of the dancer in Paris in 1928, the School in Moscow was completely ignored. These *chefs d'œuvres* which were Isadora's last creations, and which might have been shown to her admirers in Paris, were treated as non-existent.

CHAPTER XXXIII

At the beginning of September, 1924, when Isadora was negotiating with the representative of the German impresarios, she began to arrange for a series of farewell performances. These were given in the Kamerny Theatre, whose permanent company was on tour in Germany and France. She decided to do several new programmes, notably a Scriabine-Liszt one with accompaniment by Mark Metchick, the well-known pupil of the Russian master, a Chopin programme, and an evening of Revolutionary dances.

For the latter programme she arranged a series of dances which were inspired by the struggle for Freedom in various other countries of the world. She herself began the programme by miming an Irish song, which Irma sang off-stage: *The Wearin' o' the Green.* This was followed by the girls dancing a glorified version of the Irish jig and reel combined. The French Revolution episode followed this, and Isadora gave her blood-stirring representation of the *Marseillaise*, the words of which were sung off-stage by a singer from the Moscow Opera. She danced, then, with

all the girls, a thrilling *Carmagnole*. Then came the stirring *Rakowsky March*, portraying the Hungarian revolt.

The second part of the programme contained all the Russian revolutionary dances which Isadora had composed. These the girls sang as well as danced, and on this their first presentation to an audience, they were received with spontaneous and ringing cheers. At the end, as the Isadorable pupils, accompanied by the five hundred children they had taught all summer, danced and sang the *Internationale* and wound down off the stage through the audience, the whole house took up the refrain of the anthem, and the theatre became vibrant with the revolutionary choral, sung as only a Russian audience knew how to sing it.

For the second evening, on which she was to dance alone, accompanied by the pianist Metchick, in a programme of Scriabine and Liszt, she prepared a few notes from which the secretary of the School made a sort of explanatory speech.

We set down these bare notes for the interest they may have to those who are interested in Isadora's ideas about music :

" Notes for a Speech Preceding the Liszt-Scriabine Programme. Kamerny Theatre, Moscow, Sept. Twenty-first, 1924.

" The two sources of Art : Apollo and Dionysus.

" Music since the time of Bach has been under the influence of Apollo.

" Liszt's music is Apollonian. It always seeks for the beauty that comes to human beings from without. Beauty, but a weaker beauty for humanity than Dionysus can inspire.

" Scriabine Dionysian.

" In his music you will quickly see that his creative strength comes from within.

" Liszt's *Les Funerailles*, a human being reaching for happiness and each time falling crushed to earth again.

" *The Legend of St. Francis d'Assisi.* The soul of this beautiful human seeing the brotherhood of man in all nature.

" In the *Requiem* of Beethoven and the *Parsifal* of Wagner the human being is resigned and humble before Fate.

" With Scriabine begins a new epoch when the human being defies Fate.

" Scriabine's *Fourth Sonata.* 1st Movement. The human being lies in the centre of the earth, earth-bound.

" 2nd Movement. He dances, expressing earthly joy, but his eyes are drawn out to the universe.

" 3rd Movement. The discovery which comes to the human being of an understanding of the universe giving him the highest ecstasy.

" Scriabine is one of the precursors of the

revolution and a prophet of it—with music, not words.

" Scriabine is a bridge from the old world to the new. He himself took no active part in the building and the conquering of the new world, but he made a great breach in the gigantic wall that stood between the two worlds.

" I also am trying to make another breach in the wall like Scriabine.

" I believe that my School will create a new art or show the way towards it. Only the new generation will be able to express the new world and find new genius and new ideas.

" It is impossible for me to teach this. You must do it yourselves. Because everything that has been has belonged to the old world. I myself am from the old world and greet the new world that had its birth here."

On the third evening the whole programme was devoted to the works of Chopin, which Isadora had so often danced in France and America. The fourth evening, before the children danced their Schubert, Gluck, and Strauss dances, Isadora made a long speech to the public, a translation from the stenographic report of which follows :

" I am very sorry I cannot speak Russian. I am an American, and it would really be more

easy for me to address you in English. I shall speak in German, however, because I am sure most of the audience present understand German, and also because Mr. Schneider can translate from this language into Russian all that I am going to tell you about my Art, my Life, my School. You must all forgive me, if I seem somewhat egoistical, as I am going to speak about myself, but my Life is so tightly bound up with my Art, it is so much one and the same that I must always refer to it.

" I was born in America in the town of San Francisco on the day when a revolution broke out in that town. Of course the revolution was a ' golden ' one ; it was the ' golden ' day in San Francisco when all the banks went bankrupt. The furious crowds stormed in the streets. On the day of this catastrophe my mother, from one moment to another, expected my birth. She told me afterwards that she was sure that the child she expected was going to be something extraordinary in life. My father was also concerned in this bankers' catastrophe. Our house was surrounded by a threatening crowd, and all this worry, excitement, and fear, my mother thought, was sure to have some effect on the child she was expecting. That is why she believed I was going to be something extraordinary.

" After these stormy days, my mother was left

to Fate with four small children on her hands. Although an educated woman, she was only able to earn a bite of bread for herself and her children by giving music lessons. Of course her earnings were small and not sufficient to feed her children. When I remember my childhood, I see before me an empty house. My mother at her lessons, we children sat alone, mostly hungry, and in winters mostly cold. Although our mother couldn't give us physical food, she did give us enough spiritual food. We forgot our hunger and cold when she played Schubert and Beethoven to us or else read Shakespeare, Shelley, Browning.

" When I was little, I had no toys or childish fun. I often ran away alone into the woods or on to the beach by the sea, and there I danced. I felt then that my shoes and my clothes hindered me. My heavy shoes felt like chains, and my clothes were my prison. So I took everything off. And without any eyes watching me, all alone, I danced quite naked by the sea, and it seemed to me as if the sea and all the trees were dancing with me. . . .

" As my mother was very poor, and we often did not have the money for the most necessary needs of life, our neighbours, who were aware of my dancing talent, advised my mother to let me dance before the public, so that I might earn money. And so, out of necessity, I was forced, a

four-year-old child, to dance before the public. That is why I don't like children to dance before the public for money, as I experienced what it meant to dance for a piece of bread. But the same necessity which brought me, as a four-year-old child, on the stage, brings the children of our School before the public. Nothing to eat ; no money to pay the water and electricity bills. For the support of our School we are forced to give performances. But I beg you, when you look at the children, not to see in them little actors against the background of theatrical scenery. I want you to see them against the background of nature, where they could dance freely on the meadow and amongst the trees. I am showing you only a small group of children, as the house in which the school is now situated has not a large enough dancing hall. There is room for not more than twenty children there. But that is not enough. I want to give to the future thousands of happy, healthy children."

(Here the children of the School danced the Schubert *Requiem March.*)

" What fine, what beautiful children they are, are they not ? But I want all the children in Russia to be like that. After books, after study, I want to say to them all : come now, children, let us dance. I want every child in Russia to have this naturalness, this joy, this beauty, which

ought to be theirs. I regret that I can give my art and my work only to a small group of children.

" Have you ever read J. J. Rousseau's *Émile* ? He says there that a child lives every day a very intensive and beautiful life, and that one must give the child the possibility of making use of this. I don't ' teach ' children. I have no special systems and methods. I don't say to the child : ' Hold your hand so, or put your foot so.' You have seen yourself that every child dances naturally. You saw that the movements are not taught ; that they grow like plants, that they unfold like flowers.

" Little children don't understand verbal teaching. Words, for children, are not alive. Little children learn through movements. Children up to the ages of ten or twelve learn more from the soul. But now nobody believes any more in the soul. So I say they learn from the spirit, from intuition. I have noticed that the smallest children understand Beethoven and Schubert, but they could never understand them through words, only through movements. They form themselves as naturally as plants with all their feelings. The life of a child changes all the time, changes continually, and every pedagogue who wants to, adapts himself to the child who is like a plant, never static, continually growing. The pedagogue should give the child something new every day.

" To-day you have seen how every child expresses the same dance differently. One must approach each child separately, as each child is different from the other.

" I hate muscles, arms, and legs. I never say to a child : ' Hold yourself so ; do so.' I don't like physical culture, sports. I don't like the Dalcroze system. I find all that is a sin, and a crime committed against the nature of the child. A child needs something quite different. It needs naturalness without pressure, without influence. It is not necessary to subject it to any demands. It should, by itself, like a plant, unfold to the light, to the sun.

" Here in our head is knowledge, thought : here in our breast is a motor which supplies power for our most wonderful emotions. I say to the child : ' Put your hands here on your breast, then lift them up high and higher to the stars, to the planets. Embrace the whole world with your arms. Reach out to the Universe. You are only a small child, but you stand on the earth. There is a place for you in the Universe.'

" Some Communists have told me that all this is ' mystic.' Arms outstretched to the stars are ' mystic.' But I teach the children to look up above them, to look around, to be conscious of the whole Universe. . . . Is that mysticism ? No, I have no mysticism. I say to the child : ' Look at

the world, the whole Universe dances together with you, the human being. Man, different from all the other animals, holds up his head, while his feet remain on the earth.'

" Soon the children will come before you with simple movements, and you must imagine that it is night and that they are looking at the stars. I say to the children : ' When you run out into the woods or into the garden try to keep yourselves free, in harmony with nature. Go and enjoy yourselves ; jump, play, laugh, and be boisterous.' But I am not of the opinion of some of your pedagogues that they ought to be left entirely to themselves, screaming and fighting each other like wild Indians. No, the child must learn self-control ; learn to express its feelings harmoniously. That will make it grow stronger than those children who are left to grow up wildly without learning to control themselves. To let a child develop itself through a dynamic dance is difficult, but to force it to hold its musical pause, as the children have just done in the Schubert march they danced for you, is still more difficult. I have noticed afterwards that they gained more strength from that than from the dynamic dance.

" I want very much to know what your opinion of my educational system is ? (Loud applause.) The greatest compliment paid to my School

would be if every mother in the audience said : ' I would also like my child to dance like that.' I went to Russia hoping to create something big, something grandoise. The word Bolshevik—meaning Big, I thought, inflamed me, when I heard it in Europe. I imagined that it would be possible to create a school of a thousand children here. All I needed for that was a big place to work in. And now three years have passed, and I have waited in vain.

" When I came to Russia, I did not have the intention of giving public performances. During these three years I have asked those in power to give me a big heated place in winter and a big arena in summer, where I could teach a thousand children my art. These children, here, that you have just admired, are mostly children of workers and peasants. Are they not beautiful? And does it not prove that they can be cultured and intelligent ?

" I have the desire to give the greatest joy and the greatest beauty to the children of the workers. To make them so perfect that they will be envied by the millionaire children. You have surely heard the legend of Cornelia, wherein pearls and diamonds were compared to the natural beauty of children. I would like to have the workers say, when they see thousands of children dancing in a great folk-festival : ' These are our jewels ! '

" I am afraid I have tortured you this evening with my lecture. You would have, of course, preferred seeing the children dance some more. But, as it was our intention to show you what we have achieved thus far, your slight suffering was necessary, and maybe the foundation for the future school. You Russians love discussion, therefore I beg you to voice your opinions. (A voice from the audience : ' Why are there no boys among your pupils ? ')

" I wanted very much to have five hundred boys and five hundred girls in my school. For my school is a school of life and not a school of dancing. It is a current opinion that dancing is feminine, and therefore only girls have joined my school. But I, personally, would have preferred boys, for they are better able to express the heroism of which we have so much need in this Age."

At the last performance, which was given on Saturday, the twenty-eighth of September, 1924, Madame Kalenina was present. She was so tremendously impressed by the programme of revolutionary dances that she went back after the performance to see Isadora. " What can I do for you ? " she asked.

Isadora thought for a moment. " I would like to show all these new revolutionary dances to the

leaders of the party. I am sure that if they saw how wonderful my children are they would do something to help the school. At least give us a great hall to work in and free light and enough wood to keep the children going."

" I could arrange a performance for you in the Bolshoi Theatre, to which the leaders could come and see your work. Would some time next week be all right ? "

" I'm afraid not," said Isadora. " If anything is to be done it must be done to-morrow night. I must go to Berlin on Monday morning, where I have a contract to fulfil."

Madame Kalenina thought, and then said : " You shall have an evening at the Bolshoi Theatre to-morrow, Sunday. And I promise you that all the leaders will be there."

When one is the wife of the President of all the Soviets of Russia and can command a host of clerks to telephone here and there, things are more quickly accomplished than they would be in the ordinary course of events in Moscow. In less than a day Madame Kalenina had arranged a performance for the Duncan School at the Bolshoi Theatre, and the leaders of the Communist party and 4,000 young Pioneers and Communist youths had been invited. They made, without any doubt, the most thunderingly enthusiastic audience that Isadora and her pupils had

ever danced before in Russia. The Commissar of Education and Fine Arts, Lunatcharsky, made a long speech, wherein he reiterated his belief in the exceptional importance of Isadora Duncan's work in training the younger generation.

After the performance, Isadora was surrounded by all the five hundred children who had been taught all summer in the Stadium, and who had helped swell the numbers of the school proper in the dancing of the *Internationale* at the end of the programme. With one of her impetuous movements of generosity, she opened her handbag and scattered among them all the *tchervonetz* she had gained from the performances at the Kamerny Theatre.

That night there was no thought of going to bed, as the plane for Berlin was to leave at dawn. Isadora, Irma, and their friends sat over the supper table at twenty Pretchistenka, talking of the past and the future of the school. It was absurd to be leaving, said Isadora. The psychological moment had come with the intervention of the President's wife. If she could only stay there, something would surely come of the great performance before the leaders. In any case, they must keep on the track of this. They must let her know in Berlin what the final results were. And if there seemed to be any chance of the government really doing something for the school, no

matter in how small a way, she would come right back again.

At dawn, the party motored to the Trotsky air field, where the aeroplane bound for Königsberg awaited its passengers. Isadora embraced her pupil and her friends and asked them once more to be sure and follow up the Kalenina affair. In a few moments the great machine was off, and soon the whirring of its propeller had died away.

A few hours later, however, because of engine trouble, the plane was forced down in a field. The mechanic told Isadora that it would be quite a while before the matter was righted. Before long, the machine was surrounded by a group of peasant children, who had seen the great bird swoop down out of the sky. In a moment Isadora had her portable gramophone out, and was giving the delighted boys and girls their first lesson in the dance. When the train bringing her to Russia had broken down, she had given the peasant children an informal dancing lesson ; now here, as she was leaving Russia, perhaps for the last time, her aeroplane had broken down, and she was doing the same thing to the accompaniment of the same portable gramophone. As the aeroplane flew away again, she wondered to herself if the incident were an Omega to the Alpha incident ; the complete

rounding out of the circle. Would she ever go back again to Russia ; would the school disintegrate ; would there be no end to her wanderings and disappointments ?

BERLIN—PARIS—NICE

1924-1925-1926-1927

CHAPTER XXXIV

The Russian chapters of Isadora Duncan's life were closed as the month of September, 1924, ended. Then opened a new era of disappointments and misfortunes, when her friends and family lent no helping hand ; an era of wandering from one place to another ; of lodgings in divers furnished studios and uncomfortable hotel rooms ; even of starvation. The letters that follow tell their own story of this era, which began in Berlin :

" Berlin, The Eden Hotel.
" *End of Sept., '24.*

" DEAR IRMA,

" I was waiting to have some better news to send you before telegraphing, but there is none. The contract is a fraud. Span und Francose evidently are swindlers ; they have not paid, and I am here quite stranded ! ! ! ! ! Mr. —— is responsible that I have made a contract with a couple of swindlers. I telegraphed you to ask Marholm if he could make me a contract for Wien, and await your answer. I have not a friend in Berlin, and Elizabeth has not a penny.

" The Bluthner Saal was crowded, the audiences enthusiastic, and the critics mostly insulting. For some reason Span und Francose have disappeared. I am here in a fearfully expensive hotel without a penny. A mysterious man named Mueller, who met me in Königsberg, comes to see me each day and promises to bring money, but brings none. What he has to do with the affair, I don't know. I am waiting to see a lawyer from the Russian Embassy this afternoon. Of course, I could have them all put in jail for fraud, but that wouldn't do me much good. . . .

" Telepraph me the state of affairs in Moscow, and what you would advise me to do. I feel utterly lost—these first concerts were so badly arranged that it makes future contracts difficult. They had an awful orchestra of *forty*, who played all out of tune and time. Here I sit, just as we did in Leningrad, like a prisoner ; not even money for a taxi ! ! ! !

" Telegraph me your advice. I am nearly on the verge of suicide. Elizabeth cannot help, as she is very busy and has not a sou ! ! ! My only hope is that Marholm may be able to arrange something in Vienna and Tcheko-Slovakia. The newspapers here naturally are fearfully hostile and treat me as if I had only come here *paid* to make Bolshevik propaganda, which, considering the *Truth*, is a very poor joke.

" Elizabeth says I never danced so well before and raves about my Art, how it has ' grown.' Well, that's some comfort.

" I feel very lonely, and would like to be back in that ' awful room ' in Pretchistenka.

" Love to you and the children.

" ISADORA."

" Berlin, The Eden Hotel.
" *Beginning of October.*

" DEAREST IRMA,

" It seems my fate in 1924 to be tragically *stranded.* I am still waiting here for something—God knows what—Berlin is simply fearful. Better to sell matches on the streets of Moscow. Here is no spirit ; everything congested with *patriotismus* and fatherland. It is awful.

" Elizabeth is sweet, but has not a pfennig ! I received your telegrams and telegraphed to Marholm if he could make me a contract for Vienna. Await answer. This —— must be sent to *Narimsky Kriem.* He has no right to recommend a man like ——, who is a common swindler. He (——) says I have broken the contract, because I was not here eight days beforehand, and wants to bring lawsuit *against me,* although I danced two evenings *without receiving a penny.* I must have the contracts and telegrams at once to refute his

presumptions. Altogether it is Hell ! ! ! And I spend my time wondering which sort of poison doesn't hurt the most. I don't want to take any of the fearful kind.

" I have telegraphed Gordieff, and wait in hopes he will send me some money. I wish to heavens we had all gone to Tiflis. This Europe is quite impossible. I am homesick for the soldiers singing and the children singing and the marching forward *Rabotchy Narod* ![1] This old world is dead as a door nail. The children here look like Muffins compared to the Russians. I am not, perhaps, competent to explain what has happened *there*, but here *nothing* has happened, and the people are just simply stopped. Something must happen before they become alive again. At present here all is dead.

" Write me what is happening. If you can fix the contract for Siberia I will come. Love to you and to all the dear children. Love——

" Isadora. *Poor thing*. Love to you all. Maybe I die to-night.

" ISADORA."

" Berlin, Eden Hotel.
" *13th Oct., 1924.*

" DEAREST IRMA,

" Mrs. Hammer has just left my trunk and forgotten the key ! However, she telephoned she

[1] Working people.

will come soon. I have heard from Marholm, a letter asking for terms for contract. I have answered it and await reply. I telegraphed I will come at once if he sends me advance to leave here. In the meantime the *Artisten Hilfe* is trying to arrange something for me. I am to know to-day if it goes through.

" I can do nothing for the school without photos. *Without fail* send me at once good photos of the children. I can send articles and photos over the whole world, but unless you manage this I can do nothing. But I want *Art photos* and not commonplace ones. Why does my ' secretary ' not write to me, what is she doing ? Have you had no answer from Tovarish Kalenina ? You should send her a simple letter saying that you *must have* for the school free electric light, water, heat, teachers salaries, and *payocks*[1] for the children, stuff for costumes. Have they given the big room ? Everything seems to be standing still —why ? I feel like an aeroplane ' *en panne.*'

" X is appearing in a third class music hall with my name and publishing broadcast that she is a pupil of Isadora Duncan. If she wishes to go into such filth she ought at least to take her own name. When she knows what I have suffered and gone through to keep my name from the music hall, and then she drags it there.

[1] Rations.

" Please keep me posted what the School is doing and if there is a chance of getting the ' big room.' I. should go himself to Comrade Kamenieff and ask what chance the School in Moscow has for a future.

" Above all send me photos.

" With love,

" ISADORA."

" *November 27/24.*

" Berlin, Central Hotel.

" DEAR IRMA,

" Why on earth don't you write ? I have no news from you since *four weeks*. I am here stranded in this awful city. I have signed three contracts and been swindled three times. The last for Hanover. When the time came, the agent didn't have the money for the R.R. ticket. They are all swindlers.

" I cannot move from here ! Since four weeks the hotel will serve no more food. An American friend brings me a slice of roast beef a day, but he has no money either. I telegraphed to Gordieff, but received no answer. *Elizabeth has deserted me* and gone to visit a rich friend in Vienna. *Her school in Potsdam won't even let me in.* I was ill for two weeks with a bronchitis, and now, to cap the climax, an ulcerated tooth.

" I have telegraphed Raymond, but he is in Nice and apparently *can't* or *won't* do anything. Germany is the limit, simply fearful, I don't know what's going to happen next.

" Please write and tell me your news. How are the children ?

" It seems everyone in Vienna is starving and Marholm also.

" With love to you and the children.

" Yours in a dying stage,

" ISADORA."

" Central Hotel, Berlin.

" *Dec. 16, 1924.*

" DEAR IRMA,

" Why don't you answer my telegrams and letters ? Since six weeks I am without any word from you, although I repeatedly sent *luftpost*[1] letters and telegrams. I am frightfully anxious. Are you ill ? Does the School still exist ? I can obtain no passport here from the Russian Embassy. Please do whatever is necessary to obtain this passport for me and also a divorce from Sergei Alexandrovitch—God bless him, but he's no good for a husband.

" I may have to return to Moscow, as here my allowance to stay expires in a week. *Every country*

[1] Air mail.

has refused me a visa on account of my '*political connections.*' What are my *political connections*? Where are my political connections, I would like to know?

"I am utterly stranded and lost here in a very hostile city. I haven't a single friend. If I return, is it possible to make a contract for Siberia?

"They have even refused me a visa on a contract for Vienna. Perhaps I. had better get on an aeroplane and come here and save me, otherwise you will soon be sending a wreath for my funeral. But why haven't you answered a single letter or telegram for six weeks?

"Love to the children, if they still exist, and to you and to all friends.

"YOUR DYING ISADORA."

Among the few friends who succoured the unfortunate dancer in her distress in Berlin were two American music students, a young singer named Martin and a pianist named Allan Coe. Both were living on small allowances, but they gave to Isadora up to their last penny. They kept her company and cheered her up. When things came to an impasse; when there came no reply from the family or the intimate friends of the starving dancer, Coe wrote the following letter to a friend in Paris:

" Central Hotel, Berlin.

" DOUGIE,

" We boys have given out our last cent, and we all three are broke—stranded ! Honest to God !

" Please go *personally* (not write) to Isadora's friends, and try to get some money, and telegraph it.

" Desperately,

" ALLAN.

" (Over) "

And on the other side of the sheet of paper, scribbled with scrawling, pencilled writing, as though it were the work of a human being ill and despairing to the point of death, was a message from Isadora :

" Where is Raymond ?

" I have written and telegraphed to him and to Aia in vain——

" Perhaps if you asked *Walter* he would do something—or his dear brother, who really is my friend, Frank——

" *Pour l'Amour de Dieu sauvez-moi.*

" Love.

" ISADORA."

Dougie spoke to friends in Paris, pleading with them to do something, but all his pleadings and

Isadora's tragic letters remained unheeded. In America a friend scraped together a few hundred dollars to send to the stranded dancer. With that sum Isadora managed to reach Brussels, and from there, with the help of Cécile Sorel, who arranged for her visa, she journeyed to Paris.

CHAPTER XXXV

From Berlin the news had gone out that Isadora Duncan was going to give out for publication all the love letters she had ever received in her life. As soon as she arrived in Paris, she was pestered by the representatives of the various sensational papers in America and England. She denied to them, however, that she had ever thought of doing such a thing ; she was considering writing her memoirs and telling the story of her Art, she said. Her Art was much more important than her love affairs. And to all the fantastic offers for permission to reprint the intimate letters in her possession she turned a deaf ear.

Paris in January was not too pleasant, she found. Only a few friends came to see her at her hotel. To Irma, still in Moscow, she wrote the following letter the day she received news about the illness of one of her former pupils, Margot, whom she had not seen since before the journey to Russia.

" Paris, *Feb. 1, 1925.*

" Dearest Irma,

" I have not had the courage to write, I have

been going through sad, fearful experiences. At last I arrived here. I am hardly alive, just gasping. Now I have some faint hope on the horizon, but nothing is sure yet.

" I was offered by the —— —— a sum for my ' memoirs,' but afterwards it all turned to *black-mail*, and they wrote fearful articles by way of revenge.

" For three months they refused me a visa to come to Paris. At last here I am. For Heaven's sake write to me. If you could only send me good photos of the school, I am sure I could raise funds for you. But people hardly believe there is a school. Write to me. Tell me what hope is there for the school ? Will the house remain ? Is anything stable, or is it a quicksand ? My only hope of funds at this moment is the Memoirs. I have now met a good friend who will occupy himself with the book, but I need all the *letters and documents necessary*, which are in my trunk in Moscow. Will you give them only to whoever comes to you from the part of Isaac Don Levine ?

" If I receive the $20,000 promised, I will either come to Moscow in the spring with *money*, or if you think Moscow hopeless, you can join me in London with sixteen pupils. But *reflect well* which will be best.

" I am much worried about Margot, who, I have just heard by telephone, is in a hospital

here very ill. I will go and see her to-morrow, but *Christine should have told me this sooner . . .*

" Dearest Irma, I was just writing the above when they suddenly telephoned me that Margot was dying. I took a taxi and rushed to the hospital, but *too late.* It all seems so unhappy and miserable. I am ill but will write soon. Love.

" ISADORA."

Isadora's brother Raymond had for many years carried on a flourishing business in hand-woven carpets and fabrics for dresses and draperies, which were painted or stencilled by his " disciples." Besides his two retail stores for the sale of these goods in Paris, he had a house and studio in Nice. Between the southern city and the capital he often travelled in an old-fashioned Ford, which he himself, garbed in the flowing robes of Greece, drove along the French highways. As he was about to make a trip to Nice in March, he graciously offered to take his unhappy sister away from the fog and dampness of Paris down to the happier climate of the Riviera. He also promised to fix up a room for her in the little apartment over the shop on the Boulevard Gambetta.

To some friends in Nice who joked with her about the Ford driven by the " Greek-robed

member of the Chamber of Commerce" as she laughingly called him to Jo Davidson, Isadora replied: "Oh! no, it wasn't really funny. When little brother Raymond would get out to crank the Ford, the peasants would watch him with great interest. Oh, no! they never laughed. They were very grave and polite!"

It was from the Raymond Duncan Studio that Isadora wrote again to Irma:

"Nice, *March 12, 1925.*

"DEAREST IRMA,

"I have suffered a nervous prostration and could not put pen to paper. All the different hardships and calamities of the past year have been a bit too much. However, I am resting here with Raymond and hope soon to begin the battle again.

"Please send me news and photos, no matter how small the photos. I can send you money for school, if I have propaganda material. But I have nothing to show. I sent through a friend for someone to take photos of the school but have had no reply. As for the letters, find some absolutely *sure* way of sending them to *me direct.* Either by the Russian Embassy, Paris, or a very sure friend.

"X is dancing here in restaurants where people sit at tables and eat, drink, talk, etc. I am told

what she does is simply pitiable. She came to see me, but there is no longer any intelligent or artistic contact possible. She speaks of going to Russia, but I am afraid it would be a very bad example for the children, as she only thinks of exploiting my work for her insignificant ideas. It is sad but nothing to do about it.

" As soon as I feel better, I will write you if possible of my future plans. The sun and the sea are reviving. I wish you were here to rest a bit. Write or telegraph me Lloyds Bank.

" Love to all the children, love to you, and Hope through everything. My motto : ' *Sans Limites.*'

" ISADORA."

After a while spent in the austere atmosphere of the Raymond Duncan cult, Isadora longed for a couch more resilient than her ascetic brother's wooden benches covered with several layers of hand-woven carpets. To her friend, Georges Maurevert, she confided her longings. Having some influence with the manager of the fashionable Negresco Hotel on the Promenade des Anglais, he persuaded him to give the dancer a small room with bath at a greatly reduced rate.

Some time later Isadora discovered in the Californie district of Nice, quite close to the Promenade des Anglais, a small theatre, which

she persuaded one of her friends to rent for her. She thought that if she could have this place draped with her blue curtains and properly arranged, she might give performances during the Riviera season and perhaps start another school. Always in the back of her mind was the thought of a school ; of teaching children.

From the Negresco, at the end of March, she wrote the following letter to Moscow :

" Nice, *March 30, '25.*

" DEAREST IRMA,

" I have just received your letter ; poor darling, it sounds awful. By now you have my last letter, and you know that if I haven't written it is because I have been having such a *Hell* of a time that I really felt ashamed to send you one wail after another.

" Nobody realised it, but poor little Margot's death was the finishing touch. I simply almost gave up entirely. I am only just recovering from the ghastly cruelty and terror of the whole thing. I confess—I can't understand—the whole scheme of things is *too* unbearable.

" Any reports that I have spoken against the Soviet Gov't are *absolutely false*, and unfounded. On the contrary, it is because I speak only well of them that I met with a *universal persecution.* My dancing the *Internationale* before six thousand

proletaires in Berlin was the starting point of a blackmailing and libellous newspaper campaign against me, universally undertaken by the world's press. I am suing the ——— but the suit does not advance because I have not the funds to launch it. It seems such suits cost a lot of money.

" A friend took a studio for me here. It is a perfect gem. A little theatre twice as big as the Rue de la Pompe with a stage, footlights, etc. If we could arrange for you to come here with sixteen of the most talented children, we might succeed in saving them. I tried through the Soviet Embassy in Paris to have the school brought in the Russian Dept. of the Decorative Arts Exposition, but without success. Have you been to Tovarish Kalenina ? Can nothing be done ?

" The world is a sickening place. I am living from hand to mouth. My *friends* have all deserted me. The joke of the whole thing is that it is current gossip that I receive vast sums from the Soviets. Isn't that beautiful ? I am relying on money that should come from Gordieff to pay for the studio. I think it would at least be a *refuge* at the last extremity. It would be a good idea, if all else fails, that you come here, and perhaps together we may find some way out. But unless the Soviet Gov't will help, I think it is about *hopeless* for the school in Moscow. But you know,

being a bit *prophetic*, I sensed as much when I was last there.

" Did you see Dr. Rosenberg who has the great plans for Jerusalem? Perhaps we might go there ! ! ! Ask I. to write and answer the following questions : What does he advise? Has he any hopes for this summer from Podvowsky or others? Would my returning make things better or worse?

" Please understand that I am absolutely boycotted in Europe, and that because I have spoken for the Soviets and for no other reason. You should have this fact clearly proved at headquarters. After my *Internationale* in Berlin, no manager or theatre would have anything to do with me. If we are to die, better arrange a meeting and die together. At the last extremity come here. You can sleep in the studio, bathe in the sea, and we will always find a meal. All my love. I kiss you a thousand times and the poor, dear children.

" Love, ISADORA."

Even without funds the time passed very agreeably at Nice. She called it " Kundry's Garden." She saw many friends, and made new acquaintances. Occasionally she dined with Frank Harris, who had a flat at Cimiez above Nice, or she passed the evening with her old friend Georges Maurevert, the writer. While sitting one day in April

at the bathing beach near the Negresco Hotel, she was stung by a fly, but paid no attention to the sting until the following day, when her right arm began to swell dangerously and she became quite ill.

The swelling had to be lanced, and she remained some time afterwards in bed. While ill and unable to write, she thought of having someone go over some of her articles on the dance. She had a stenographer come in, and dictated the following letter in French to Dougie in Paris :

" Nice, *the 29th April, 1925.*

" DEAR FRIEND,

" I am at Nice, sick. I was obliged to have an operation following the sting of a poisoned fly.

" I have many articles and manuscripts on the dance which have never been published. Could you find me a market for them with a French or an American paper ?

" I would be very grateful to you.

" I regret very much not having seen you while you were here on the Coast.

" Send me quickly news of yourself. I send you my most affectionate souvenirs.

" (signed) ISADORA DUNCAN."

But the friend could do nothing about the

articles on the dance. No editor seemed to be interested in any way in what the greatest dancer had to say about her art. Had she deigned to write dreadful revelations about the Bolshevists, her articles would have found a ready market.

She told her friend that it was in her mind to write a book called *My Bolshevik Days*, but first she must write up the memories of the years preceding her Russian days. But she could not decide to start this work, however, giving as an excuse that she was not a writer. If she could only persuade Frank Harris or Blasco Ibanez to handle her material, she kept on saying, with all their art, she felt sure that a sensational book would be the result. But both these men of letters were extremely busy, and both gave her the same counsel : dictation to a stenographer.

Georges Maurevert tells of how he took the dancer to lunch with Ibanez at this period.

" Saturday the 2nd of May I had the honour of presenting the illustrious American artiste to the most celebrated Spanish novelist. With the happy aid of his good and gracious wife, Blasco Ibanez offered us a *déjeuner* as exquisite as usual, for there was never anything, in the way of wines or dishes, too good for his guests. And he added the incomparable attraction of his torrential speech, interesting us, moving us, making us almost die of laughter. His whole being spoke of

the joy of living. And how he knew the way to lift up the *morale*, to give hope, promising, if it were necessary, his aid.

" I remember that Isadora Duncan had at that time many difficulties that could only be conjured away by the publication of her *Memoirs*, for which American publishers had made splendid offers. But Isadora, she who was activity itself, at her début, as at the height of her great success, had become lazy and indifferent to everything ; there was something broken within her since the tragic death of her two adored children. She could not decide to start work on the memories, despite the fortune that they represented. . . . Blasco chid her in a brotherly way : ' If you can't write them, speak them ! . . . It's not difficult. . . . There are writers who specialise in this sort of thing in America. I will have my agent send one over here if you wish. . . . You will tell him all your stories as though you were speaking to a friend. . . . And he writes, he writes. . . . You read, you correct . . . and then you sign. . . . You see it's not so difficult. . . . And you will gain millions and millions of francs ! A name like yours represents a hundred editions ! . . .' "

CHAPTER XXXVI

In the autumn of 1925, Isadora tore herself away from Kundry's Garden and returned to Paris to stay at the Hôtel Palais D'Orsay. She occupied a sombre little room at the back of the big hotel, but the expenses were soon too much for her. One of her constant admirers, Mademoiselle Thalia Rosales, offered her a furnished studio in the Rue des Sablons in Passy. To this place Isadora moved her few belongings : a small head of Buddha beautifully carved in diorite, photographs of herself with Ernst Haeckel, photographs of Eleonora Duse, of Gordon Craig, a wicker basket of letters and manuscripts, and a few books.

The studio was none too comfortable, for there was neither a bathroom nor any heat other than that given off by a gas heater ; nor was the place any too quiet, facing, as it did, an enormous garage. Isadora seemed to pass her days there sitting waiting for something to turn up. Often there were penniless days when she went without anything to eat ; other days Dougie would come in and heat a tin of peas or beans and make some

coffee—Rumpelmayer's most expensive !—on the electric heater. Becoming more and more depressed each day, and with the damp Parisian winter approaching, Isadora decided to move into a little furnished apartment in the Rue de Franqueville in the Muette district.

There, at least she had a bathroom and a diminutive bedroom and tiny sitting-room. There was also a balcony where one could have a magnificent view of the city and where, on occasion, a bottle of champagne could be left to cool. It was to this place that she invited her friend the novelist André Arnyvelde, who had once been her secretary, to discuss the idea of starting in Paris, under the auspices of the French Communist party, a school where a thousand proletarian children would be taught to dance. To Arnyvelde, Isadora said, as recorded by Henriette Sauret: " ' Let them give me five hundred, a thousand children, and I will make them do wonderful things ! The child is the harmonious instinct, the total freshness ; it is the virgin clay wherein can be imprinted joy, life, nature. All children can dance if one knows how to guide them and make them understand what the dance should be. But the body is nothing, we must first instruct the soul. If they will give me a thousand children, I will bring here my best pupils from Moscow. They will act as monitors of the school, and they

will live with me, being nourished and clothed by me. Living among my books and works of art, they will be impregnated by my principles. . . . But you must impress on the leaders of the party that for all this capital is necessary.' "

Madame Sauret goes on to tell that Arnyvelde was quite taken with the idea and approached the leaders of the Communist party.

" They took quite favourably to the suggestion and delegated one of their number to negotiate about the material side of the affair. But the *pourparlers* just trailed along. Isadora wanted to stick to the Idea and not occupy herself with the details which she felt the party ought to attend to : the ventilating and heating of the halls, the recruiting of the Parisian children, the costs of the voyage of the little Muscovites, etc. The Communists could not make up their minds ; the matter dragged on. But Isadora's situation became critical ; the period for which she had rented the furnished apartment was expiring, and, lacking the money to take it on for another period, she began to think of returning to her studio in Nice. Yet, not having lost all hope of creating the dreamed-of school, she made a last effort. She invited the delegate of the Communist party, Doctor G., and Arnyvelde to come to the apartment in the Rue de Franqueville to lunch. She herself had prepared the sandwiches of caviar,

put up little plates of buttered crackers, olives, salted almonds, etc., and had mixed the cocktails wherein floated *cérises glacées*.

" They checked up the different conditions for the realisation of the project. Isadora set down how much money she thought was necessary, and how, in her mind, the money ought to be employed. Doctor G., very enthusiastic, promised to busy himself quite actively with the project and push the leaders into making a rapid decision. As he was leaving, Isadora said to him :

" ' Keep me posted on what is decided. I will wait to hear from you.'

" The door having closed behind the delegate, Isadora turned to Arnyvelde and said laughingly :

" ' The lunch, was it good ? And now I have but fifteen francs in my possession. . . .'

" She then gave him a little brooch in the form of a butterfly whose body was a black pearl. She had come across it among her things and wanted him to try and find a buyer for it, so that she might be enabled to hold out a few days more, or at least pay for the journey to Nice.

" For several days Arnyvelde went the rounds of the jewellers in Paris, trying to sell the brooch at the most advantageous price. The sum offered by the jewellers was derisory. . . . Hurt, the friend tried to telephone Isadora to tell her what had happened. As there was no reply to his calls he

inquired from some mutual friends what had happened. He learned from them that Isadora had gone off to Nice in a *wagon-salon* ! Disconcerting Isadora ! "

Arnyvelde immediately wrote to her to express his surprise and ask for news. By return post he received the following letter :

" Nice, *11th December, 1925*
" Hôtel Negresco.

" DEAR FRIEND,

" I came here in despair. Nothing seemed to go in Paris. No word came from Doctor G——, my term ended, and no place to lay my poor head. If you could see Doctor G——? But I'm afraid that all this is not serious ; it will be the experience of Moscow in duplicate. What to do ? Suicide, or wait, or what ? I have a studio here. I am trying to fix it up to live and work—but that's difficult without money. This hotel, very nice, gives me rates much cheaper than those of Paris.

" Thanks for your kind letter. I appreciate highly your goodness and your friendship ; I bear in my heart a precious treasure. Let us hope that better times are coming.

" I embrace you tenderly,
" ISADORA DUNCAN."

But Arnyvelde, not willing to give up a project

which from every point of view was so interesting for Isadora, continued in her absence to see the chiefs of the Communist party and kept her posted of his interviews with them. The idea of taking the children of Moscow as monitors for the new school pleased the leaders. One of them even thought that they might bring on the whole school of Moscow and give, for a certain period, a series of performances under the wing of the party. This proposition smiled at Isadora, and here is what she wrote to Arnyvelde :

" Nice, *the 24th December, 1925.*

" DEAR FRIEND,

" Thanks with all my heart for your letter. I am very touched that you think of me. You know that I am only here because I have a studio where I can work ; I couldn't do that in Paris. And since I work, even a little, I have the possibility of accepting different contracts and earning a little money. For the present I am living on borrowed money. For this hotel, they are giving me ' artiste ' rates, very low, much less than the little apartment I had in Paris. Therefore it is more practical for me to stay here for the moment. All my work was wrecked in Russia, because I didn't have the necessary money ; it would be a shame to recommence the same story in Paris. Only I think we must accept the proposition of the party.

If they will bring on the children from Moscow, the Moscow School will be saved. And when the Soviets see what a success the children are having, they will surely do something for the School.

" Do not speak of my personal affairs. We will arrange them one way or another. If they will give me the wherewithal to go myself and get the children at Moscow, I will do it. If not, I will come to Paris the day the children arrive from Russia. But I cannot live in Paris as I have lived these last two months, waiting and losing my time.

" Is Comrade Lunatcharsky still in France ? If he is, all this affair can be arranged by him. I can very well say that I ask nothing for myself, but in that case I would be forced to absent myself from time to time to go on tour and make some money.

" On the other hand, I would have wished to devote myself entirely, creating a magnificent social centre, instead of little troupes which, by the force of circumstances, degenerate into theatrical troupes, as in Moscow. But the principal thing, after all, is to *do something*, to make a beginning. Better the Moscow School with all its faults than nothing at all.

" Therefore, continue to represent me at the meetings, and say what you think best to save the children of the Moscow School, to do something,

a *beginning*. If the School can be started in Paris, for all the workers' children I have great hopes. I am ready to make all the possible and impossible sacrifices as I have already done in Moscow.

" Accept my real gratitude. I embrace you and hope to see you soon.

" ISADORA DUNCAN."

But despite the zeal displayed by Arnyvelde, spring passed without anything precise being accomplished. The question stayed " under consideration." The Communists thought of the possibility of placing the School of the Dance in the " Sports " (!) column in order to justify its creation. They kept on discussing. Isadora, to try and warm them up, came to Paris for a time and had an interview with Doctor G——. The words that passed between them satisfied them both, but once again they were only words. On her return to Nice some time afterwards, Isadora wrote the following letter to Arnyvelde :

" Nice, *the 24th August, 1926.*

" DEAR FRIEND :

" I had a long interview with M. G—— who received me in the most charming manner. He was very enthusiastic about my ideas and gave me the hope that we might begin to go towards a realisation this winter. He promised to consult

with the other comrades and give me an answer. But as that answer did not arrive, I decided to return here and await the moment when the realisation will be possible.

" I left a packet of notes in the hands of M. G——, giving exactly the work of my school in Moscow and its present situation.

" Believe me, very affectionately yours,

" ISADORA DUNCAN."

The interview with M. G—— was the last attempt towards something which the imagination of Isadora dreamed of in a grandiose way. . . .

CHAPTER XXXVII

The year 1925 had closed with the news from Russia of Essenine's death. He had committed suicide in the very room of the hotel in Leningrad where he had first stayed with Isadora. With the blood from the severed vein of his left wrist the following poem was written :

To A Friend.

Good-bye, my friend, good-bye !
You are still in my breast, beloved.
This fated parting
Holds for us a meeting in the future.

Good-bye, my friend, without hand or word ;
Be not sad nor lower your brow.
In this life to die is not new,
And to live, surely, is not any newer.

And having written this to the unnamed friend, the poet hanged himself and was discovered dead next morning by the hotel people.

Naturally, all the papers carried the story, and elaborated it with a re-hash of Essenine's Crillon

adventures in Paris and several apocryphal incidents of his life with Isadora Duncan in Russia and America.

To the press of Paris, Isadora telegraphed the following protest :

" The news of the tragic death of Essenine has caused me the deepest pain. He had youth, beauty, genius. Not content with all these gifts, his audacious spirit sought the unattainable, and he wished to lay low the Philistines.

" He has destroyed his young and splendid body, but his soul will live eternally in the soul of the Russian people and in the souls of those who love the poets. I protest strongly against the frivolous and inexact statements printed in the American press of Paris. There was never between Essenine and myself any quarrel or divorce. I weep his death with anguish and despair.

" ISADORA DUNCAN."

To Irma, who had written from Moscow giving the news of Essenine's death and burial, she wrote the following long letter :

" Nice, *January 27, 1926.*

" DEAREST IRMA,

" Thank you for your letter. I only received it to-day. I wish you would try and write oftener, if only a line.

" I was terribly shocked about Sergei's death, but I wept and sobbed so many hours about him that it seems he had already exhausted any human capacity for suffering. Myself, I'm having an epoch of such continual calamity that I am often tempted to follow his example, only I will walk into the *Sea*. Now in case I *don't* do that, here is a plan for the future.

" I have here a *wonderful* studio which I have not been able to use. First no carpet, then no stove, then no piano. Now I have carpet, stove, piano, thanks to dear *Augustin*, who gradually sent me the funds to get these things and to keep the studio. Now I have taken a small apartment next the studio, with kitchen and bath. My plan is that you should come here on a visit as soon as possible, if you can arrange to absent yourself. We could start here a *paying school à la* Elizabeth, and take pupils from America to board, etc. I have a very good woman to look out for the kitchen. Food is *cheap*, vegetables plenty. You could bring one or two of the older girls as co-teachers. By spending six months here and six months in Moscow we could join the ideal and the material.

" Now I have a studio three times as big as Rue de la Pompe with the stage and the apartment *paid* until April 15th, but I'm sitting here without a cent or without a soul to help me. If you could

come and survey the situation, there is every possibility of making a big school on business basis.

" Here is ideal climate. The hills back of the studio are covered with flowers and everything is wonderfully cheap. Yesterday I ate fresh asparagus and little artichokes. I have become a vegetarian like Raymond, and have gone back to my simple dresses of Grunewald, and *sandals*, and bare feet. The little time I stayed in Paris, I realised that life there was finished with silk stockings at 75 francs a pair.

" I see a future in the combining of this studio as a practical money-making affair and Moscow as Ideal and Art. But it has cost me the most heart-breaking effort to keep the studio, and if something is not done before April 15th, I'm afraid I will lose it. . . .

" No one else on God's earth is interested. Only you and I, and that's all. Since my return I have been treated as a ' Communist sympathiser,' and everything is impossible. But in spite of that, if we open here a big paying school, I am sure it will be a success. The studio has a beautiful *emerald green* carpet, and the only time in my life I have a studio *square* and large enough. The apartment has a terrace on the sea, where sixteen or twenty people can sit at table. The autobus and tramway pass the door to the heart of Nice, reach Massena and Casino in five minutes. Also the

Riviera is becoming more and more a summer resort.

" Please answer this letter at once, dear Irma, and see if, with what I have here as foundation, we can't create a practical money-making school. For I see at the present epoch that it is either *that* or suicide. One can't continue to live on *nothing*. I suggest that also Augustine could come over in the summer and play in the theatre, which has real scenery and footlights, and there is a large English colony here in the summer.

" I hope you will appreciate my bull-dog tenacity in hanging on to this studio as I appreciate yours in hanging on to the school. And together we will accomplish something yet. Remember you are the *only* pupil of mine who has understood what I am trying to do in this world. And you are the only one who cares whether myself or our work lives or dies, and it may be that the understanding of *one* will save *all*.

" Can't you possibly manage to send me some pictures of the children. Often I could make propaganda and obtain help for you if I had photos. Do try and have some taken, and if you cannot, send me at least some copies of what you have. Also I would appreciate if you would let me have the dates of your *tournées* and programmes. Someone told me you were all on the Volga. I knew nothing of it.

" Dear Irma, if you will be faithful I still feel we may arise and conquer the earth and knock all these sham schools and sham disciples to smash. But the time is going and I am like a wrecked mariner on a desert island, yelling for help.

" I am feeling very lonely and homesick. I am here quite *alone*. Only the little Russian woman who cooks, etc. When you get this letter, do make an effort and come. I am *sure* we can arrange something. I can get the opera house and orchestra in Marseilles for a series of festival performances, if you could bring twelve of the oldest pupils (children under twelve are no longer allowed on the stage in France).

" I press you to my heart, dear Irma. Let us hope for the future.

" ISADORA."

On the same day she wrote to Dougie a brief letter telling of her blueness :

" *Jan. 27, '26.*

" DEAR DOUGIE,

" Where are you ?

" Lost in the wilds of America.

" I am feeling much more blue than this paper.

" Write me a line. Love.

" ISADORA

" 349 Pd. des Anglais. I have a little apartment next to Studio."

After taking the studio and the apartment, and managing to furnish them both, she came across a stranded Russian gentleman, who consented to work as her secretary. She also found a pianist —a stranded Caucasian—and began to arrange for some performances to be given in the studio. Only a limited number of tickets were sold for these performances—a hundred at a hundred francs apiece. Of this she wrote to Irma at the beginning of April :

" *April 1st, 1926.*

" Studio D'Isadora Duncan,
" 343 Promenade des Anglais,
" Nice.

" Dear Irma,

" I spent the entire month of March ill in bed. . . . The doctor said something ——itis. But I think it was a congestion of despair. I am up again, but weak, and I'm celebrating Good Friday with a performance of sacred music and dance in the studio. I have found a clever secretary, and things are looking up. The turning point will be if we are able to pay the rent April 15th. *Everyone* is enthusiastic over the ' Pay School,' but I would have to have pupils to help me. Could you send me two or three ?

" What is Mark Metchick doing ? Would he come here, and on what conditions ? Give him my affectionate remembrances. I could put him

up here and give him the studio to give concerts in. Ask him to write me and state on what conditions, etc., he could join me.

"The crucial moment is April 15th, when I must pay the *rent*. Anything you can do to help that will be welcome. Please write what are your plans for the summer. I might be able to come and see you in the month of July and August, but I must know your plans and where you will be. Why don't you make an effort to visit me in the month of May! We might together plan some great world movement.

"Do you ever see our friend Podvowsky? I wrote him two letters without any reply. Has his enthusiasm for the red tunics waned?"

"*April 7, 1926.*

"The Good Friday performance was a great success. A hundred tickets were sold at hundred francs a ticket and great *stimmung* and enthusiasm. The studio was *lovely* with alabaster lamps, candles, incense, heaps of white lilies, and lilacs. Quite like the Archangel's times. Of course, it is the end of the season. If we had only had the money to open sooner we would have made a fortune. I have hopes of building a theatre here in a year or two. A Bayreuth by the Sea.

"'Lohengrin' is coming to his villa here in May.

" Why not come with sixteen children ; we can always make their board. And think of swimming in the lovely blue sea every morning. Please write soon. All my love to you. Love.

" ISADORA."

After the performances in the studio, the Riviera season being all over, Isadora began to weary in Nice. The money she had gained from the performances had all gone to pay the pianist, the florist, and the man who rented her the alabaster lamps. She wanted to go to Paris, but had no money to pay for the train. One morning she went into a garage and rented a car. Two days later she was in Paris at the Hôtel Lutetia, with the car waiting outside to take her about town and for rides in the Bois.

In the Lutetia, as in the Negresco in Nice, she had a stenographer come in occasionally to take down parts of the memoirs. There were also visits from various friends, and from agents and publishers anxious for the book. But the general consensus of opinion seemed to be that the book was too " arty." Scandal was expected from the dancer. Intimate details of her love affairs and an *étalage* of all her love letters.

But more interesting to her than her memoirs was the idea of having her children in Moscow

come to Paris. Two or three times she went to the Russian Embassy to see Rakowsky. Of this she wrote to Irma :

" Hôtel Lutetia, Paris.
" *June 15, 1926.*

" DEAREST IRMA,

" I was so glad to receive your letter with the programme. Please send me a line often. I have been seeing Comrade Rakowsky about a plan to bring you with some children of the school to Paris to make great manifestation at the Trocadéro. They are very enthusiastic about the idea, but always the same cry : ' No Money.' Meyerholdt was there, and his wife, very sweet to me. Meyerholdt and his troupe are coming to Paris. . . .

" I still keep the studio in Nice, but if something doesn't turn up before *July 15th*, rent day, I'm afraid I will lose it.

" Did you receive programmes, clippings, etc.? I have made a great struggle, but absolutely no one in the world to help me. Everyone takes a little piece of my idea and runs off with it to sell it. I am told Anna's and Theresa's performances in New York are quite absurd, and Lisa is doing idiotic things here. Christine and Erica spent the winter with ' Lohengrin ' in Palm Beach. . . . It's a silly world.

" Do write and tell me if I can manage to be with you this summer. *Where* will I find you and when ? Send me more programmes. I left one with Comrade Rakowsky.

" Madamoiselle Rosales had just sent me an immense basket of roses, *red*. She also is giving performances. . . .

" Give my dearest love to all the children and write me soon.

" Love.

" ISADORA."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Each day, the little Mathis motor-car, hired in Nice, stood outside the main entrance of the Hotel Lutetia awaiting Madame's orders. And each day, a little more was added to the growing bill for its hire and the chauffeur's wages. At last, finding there was nothing to be done about her memoirs or her plan for bringing the Moscow children to Paris, she decided to return to her studio in Nice.

Two friends went with her on the journey by motor-car : a young journalist, Walter Shaw, and his friend Marcel Herrand. It was quite characteristic of the dancer that her penury did not prevent her spirit of hospitality from overflowing. During her stay at the Lutetia she lived "*en pension*" (as a means of economy !) and, discovering that the meals served were of fairly generous portions, she invariably invited impecunious young writers and artists to come and share the lunches and dinners with her. On these occasions she would order a bottle of excellent wine and an extra dish from the "*carte*." The total cost of these two items always came to much more than the price of the *table d'hôte* meal.

Between sun-bathing at Juan-les-Pins, and living the simple life in the apartment on the Promenade des Anglais, the summer passed agreeably. But with no money in sight—a small fortune having been spent on the hire of the Mathis car and the wages of the driver—Isadora came around to the idea of giving some more performances in the Studio Theatre.

The Caucasian pianist was engaged again, and a very successful Liszt programme was given on September 10th. This was followed four days later by another recital at which Jean Cocteau, the French poet, read his famous *Mariées de la Tour Eiffel*, assisted by Marcel Herrand. Herrand also read a group of Cocteau's poems, and Isadora danced while the poet read from his *Orphée*. For the programme of this recital Cocteau drew a pen and ink design.

After these performances came that particularly dead season on the Riviera when the few summer visitors have departed, and the visitors for the winter season have not yet arrived. Isadora was growing more and more restless with the inactivity, and once more she left the Côte d'Azur for Paris and the Hôtel Lutetia.

Arriving at the Lutetia, she found that another worry had cropped up to make her life miserable. Her house in Neuilly was to be sold to pay a debt which in 1922 had been 3,000 francs, but which,

by the addition of innumerable bailiff's fees, had mounted to over 10,000 francs. For some time back she had made desperate efforts to sell the property, but it was too heavily mortgaged and was also occupied by a perfume and soap manufacturer, whose lease had still a few years to run. The memories that circled about the house in Neuilly were very painful for Isadora. It was from this house that her two beloved children went out to be engulfed in the muddy waters of the Seine ; she had also had an irritating and protracted law suit, because her brother Raymond and his disciples had taken from the place a bath and some plumbing after Isadora had let the house to a well-known French artist, who later brought an action against her.

Standing, as it did, on its own grounds near the American Hospital, the property was very valuable. But all the efforts of Isadora and her friends to sell it, even for a fraction of its worth, were unavailing. The date set for the judicial sale came around therefore, and in the Palais de Justice on November twenty-fifth, 1926, the property was sold for the ridiculous sum of 310,000 francs.

The day before the sale, she had been informed that the courts of Moscow, in view of the fact that she was the widow of Essenine, had decided that she was the legal heir to his estate. This estate

consisted of about 400,000 francs, which had come from the royalties on the fantastic sale of his poetry all over Russia after his death. But penniless though she was, Isadora drafted a telegram which she had a friend translate into Russian and send to the Chief Judge of the Moscow Court. In it she waived all rights to the Essenine fortune, and suggested that it be given to his sister and peasant mother, who needed it much more than she did ! . . .

Feeling that she would work much better in Nice, where she had a dependable stenographer in Miss Nickson, Isadora wanted to leave the Hôtel Lutetia and go down there for the rest of the Winter. The bill that had been accumulating in the hotel acted, however, as a brake to her desire. There was no prospect of leaving for Nice and certainly no prospect of paying the bill. Then it was that the good Samaritan, who always seemed to be standing in the background for Isadora, came forward in the person of Madame Yorska, the well-known actress. Madame Yorska, whose personal fortune was not very great, managed to find the ready cash to clear off the Lutetia bill, and Isadora, with a light heart, went off towards Kundry's Garden once more, accompanied by her companion, a young Russian pianist.

In the meantime, she had been working on her memoirs, and had begun to realise that therein

lay the only hope for the rehabilitation of her scattered fortunes. Various friends in New York : Augustin Duncan, Mercedes de Acosta, Mary Desti, and others, had been trying to sell these memoirs, sight unseen, to American publishers. One of the firms who were approached finally had their Paris agent, W. A. Bradley, draw up a contract for the book. They consented to give an advance of two thousand dollars, with an added bonus of five hundred dollars if the completed manuscript were finished by the end of May, 1927. The sum was placed in Bradley's hands, to be doled out to the dancer on receipt of so many pages of finished manuscript.

Bradley returned from America with the contracts at the beginning of 1927, and went down to Nice, where Isadora Duncan signed them. When Dougie went on to Nice to see her on February fifth, she showed him the contract and said :

" It's not very good, is it ? But it's signed. And now I must go on and finish it. I have never yet put my signature to a contract that I did not carry out. But how can I write ? You must help me."

" Nonsense, Isadora," her friend replied. " No one can do it better than you. The first parts which I read in Paris, the parts which cover your childhood days in San Francisco and your early days in Chicago and New York, are marvellous.

No one could have done them better than yourself. You have a real gift for expression ; you have a very personal idiom. Don't you remember once saying that as a dancer you were a great public speaker ? "

" Yes ! " she smiled. " How you and all my other friends hated to hear me ' *spoil* ' the impression of my performances by speaking what was on my mind after each one ! You must come to the Negresco now and hear me speak my piece to my stenographer, Miss Nickson."

But when Miss Nickson finally arrived at the Negresco, Isadora felt too tired to dictate. Two young men were there to greet her, Gabriel Atkin, a charming English artist, and his friend Stokes, an English journalist, who was hanging about Isadora for material for one of the chapters in his book on Riviera personalities ; the others were to be Frank Harris, Lillian Gish, Emma Goldman, Rex Ingram, etc. ; Atkin was to do caricatures for the book. While Dougie and the young men were trying to persuade the recalcitrant dancer to dictate at least a few pages of the memoirs, an envelope was brought into the room by a valet.

From this envelope Isadora took out an imposing itemised bill. Nine thousand francs ! There was also a printed note from the office saying that if the bill were not paid that night, Madame

Duncan would have to vacate her room. Isadora was furious with indignation. It was the first time that she had ever been asked in such a way to leave a hotel. There was a hurried consultation about what was to be done. Obviously there was no money to pay the bill ; obviously, also, by the crude way in which they announced it, the management of the Negresco Hotel meant what they said in the impersonal note.

Miss Nickson was dispatched to see if it were possible to talk the manager out of the idea of demanding the immediate payment of the bill. She came back to say that the assistant manager whom she had been able to see had regretted *beaucoup*, but it was a new ruling that had to be carried out. Isadora thought for a moment, then phoned down to the office to ask the manager if he would come up to see her. In a few minutes he was in the room, bowing deferentially to Isadora reclining on the bed. Looking up sweetly at him she said : " I do not understand why you bother me with this absurd matter of a bill for a paltry nine thousand francs. After all you know who I am. You know that I have been one of your most famous and most regular clients. There have been nights when I spent in your halls double and triple the sum of this bill. I have no money at the moment. I am waiting the outcome of the sale of my property at Neuilly." She

carelessly tossed to him a few much-handled clippings from French newspapers, telling about the house in Neuilly and the litigation concerning it. These same newspaper clippings she had pushed into the hands of the tradesman who, earlier in the day, had dunned her for the payment of the bill for the hire of several alabaster lamps in her studio.

The manager gave a polite glance at the clippings, and Isadora continued : " My money is all in Paris, tied up in this fight about the house. If I am to get it, I must go there. I am planning to go there to-morrow." Dougie and the others in the room sat up. This was the first they had heard of the proposed trip. " If you feel you must have security for this absurd bill, I will leave you my Renault car which is at present in the garage."

There *was* a Renault car in the garage in Isadora Duncan's name, but it did not belong to her. An American friend who had been shocked by the waste of money on the hired Mathis car had bought this car so that Isadora could have the use of it. And so that it could not be sold or pawned, she had kept it in her own name.

The manager retired bowing from the room, hoping he had not inconvenienced Madame Duncan and hoping also that her affairs would all be straightened out in Paris. And when was

she leaving? To-morrow by the noon train! And would she step into the office at her convenience and sign some papers about the car? *Merci infiniment!*

"All this is very annoying," said the unperturbed Isadora as the door closed softly on the obsequious hireling. "Too annoying! And now I won't be able to ask them to cash this cheque for me, and I had planned to take Dougie out to dinner. And he's going back to Toulon tomorrow morning. Well, we'll all go to the Café de Paris. The *maître d'hôtel* there knows me very well. He'll cash it."

At the Café de Paris the *maître d'hôtel* came forward to greet the well-known guest. When she was seated, she took a crumpled American cheque from her red-plush handbag and said: "Would you oblige me by cashing this cheque for fifty dollars?" He took it gingerly and looked at it. A personal cheque from an obscure American admirer.

"That name there is just as though one said Rockefeller, or Astor in America. The person who signed that cheque has millions," said Isadora to the head waiter, who seemed to be hesitating.

"It is not that, Madame. This cheque is dated from September of last year. At the end of the year its goodness ceased."

" The goodness of such an American cheque lasts for ever ! " said Isadora, with a bland air of finality. " *Allez consulter la caisse.*"

When he returned to say that the cheque would be cashed as a very special favour to the " great artiste and excellent client " Isadora had already ordered the cocktails and the wine from the *sommelier*, and was consulting the tastes of Dougie and Gabriel Atkin as to the composition of the dinner.

Later that night, as the friends left the Alsatian Tavern, Isadora, with a thousand francs still in her possession, decided that Dougie ought to be driven back to Toulon in a *barouche*. But all the *cochers* wanted at least two thousand for the drive from Nice to Toulon, and so, with much laughter and many quips, the party walked along the Promenade des Anglais to the Hôtel Negresco. . . .

Next morning Isadora packed a few belongings in a suitcase, signed over the Renault car, and drove away from the hotel, leaving all her trunks and her wicker basket of important letters and documents so necessary for her memoirs. The following day she was in Paris.

CHAPTER XXXIX

When Isadora arrived in Paris on February 6th, she was advised by some friends to seek her rooms at the new Studio Hotel in the Rue Delambre in the Montparnasse district. She looked at the rooms there, and found a large studio with open fireplace, a bedroom, balcony, and bath, all for the price of a fair-sized room in a decent hotel. There she installed herself and her Russian companion-accompanist.

The question of the moment was the Neuilly house. A distinguished committee had been formed to collect funds and buy it back when it came up for auction a second time. This committee, which had been born after a friendly meeting in the apartment of Miss Dorothy Ireland, consisted of Madame Cécile Sartoris, who acted as treasurer, Madame Yorska, and Messrs. André Arnyvelde, Georges Denis, and Alfredo Sides. With the aid of the French dramatic newspaper *Comedia* and the Paris edition of the *New York Herald*, a public subscription was started, and the committee also received gifts of works of art

which were to be auctioned off later to aid the fund.

Madame Yorska wrote a moving appeal which Isadora's loyal friend Mary Fanton Roberts published in her magazine in America. We reprint the following quotation from this article, which tells of a conversation the famous actress had with the penurious dancer during the period in 1925, when she was starving in the little studio in the Rue des Sablons :

" I heard she was alone in Paris, and without funds. She had come there, hoping to get back-rental from a tenant, but hearing he was in trouble himself, she would not sue him.

" I looked her up. A friend had lent her a small studio till she could go to a hotel. I found her reading. She looked so perfectly happy, I thought reports must be exaggerated. As I could not get her to talk about her affairs, I went at it bluntly. . . .

" ' Just how much money have you left, Isadora ? '

She laughed, emptied her purse, and said :

" ' Let's count together . . . Five francs, thirty-five centimes.'

" I burst into tears.

" ' This is dreadful. Something must be done immediately. How can you sit there and read so quietly ? '

" ' I was having a beautiful time, I was reading the *Song of Solomon*. Do you know the beautiful English version, by Julia Ellsworth Ford? Yorska, dear, read it aloud to me.'

" ' Now? Certainly not, we must talk of your affairs first. Isadora, won't you make just one concession to necessity? The Champs Elysées Music Hall will give you fifty thousand francs for two weeks; they'll book you immediately.'

" ' Never, never. I've never criticised any artist who sold her body to save her art, though I don't believe art can be saved that way; but I cannot forgive anyone for betraying one's art. Art is sacred. It is the most sacred thing in the world, after children. If I had not held my art sacred, I would never have danced after the death of my little ones. When I posed for Bourdelle for the bas-reliefs, I thought that theatre was going to be a Temple. . . . Don't worry, dear, something will happen. . . . You've brought me lilies and fruit. I shall dance in front of the lilies, and I shall eat the fruit after deserving it. Tomorrow I am invited to dinner. Besides, I am expecting a cable from someone who will not refuse to loan me a thousand dollars.'

" ' Isadora, have you any definite plans for your future? '

" ' Of course I have. I have had the same one for years. I leased my house for ten years; in two

years I shall have it again ; and then I shall have my school. Before I die, I want to teach hundreds of children how to let their souls fill their growing bodies with music and love. I never taught my pupils any steps. I never taught myself technique. I told them to appeal to their spirit, as I did to mine. Art is nothing else."

" ' It takes money, Isadora, to run a house, a school, a Temple.'

" ' The rich children will pay for the poor ones.'

" ' But until then ? Isadora, you've just said you'll only have that house in two years. . . .'

" ' Yorska, don't be practical. It's unbecoming. Artists must never think about money. They must never think about anything but giving their art to the public. That is the only way to make money.'

" As I saw no trunks, my eyes searched the walls for a door leading into another room. There was none.

" ' Where are your personal things ? '

" ' There, in that bag.'

" ' There are only papers in that bag. I mean where are your clothes ? '

" ' I have them on me. That bag contains all my treasures—and such treasures. Letters of love, to myself, to my art . . . to the memory of my children. Do you know that I see them every

night ? That is why I am afraid of the night. . . . Read me the *Song of Solomon.*'

" When I had finished the book, she was crying. She laughed when she told me she possessed only five francs. . . . She laughed when she told me a travelling bag, half filled with letters, contained her entire possessions. . . . She cried when she listened to the *Song of Solomon* !

" Truly this American woman is made of divine stuff. Her name must live on for ever, this genius who truly revolutionised the world."

So the Committee went on with the idea of buying back the house to turn it into an Isadora Duncan Memorial School. They also planned that Isadora should live there for the rest of her life ; and then the house and school would be turned over to the French Government, who would carry it on. It was felt that this was the surest way of perpetuating the name and the ideals of Isadora in the future. But like all committees formed before or since, the Committee of the Isadora Duncan Memorial School had their little differences of opinion, which somewhat delayed the execution of their self-appointed task.

In the meantime, however, all through the months of March, April, and May, Isadora kept herself busy at the dictation of her memories. She was determined to have them finished by the

time stipulated in the contract. There were many know-alls, of course, in Paris as in New York, who said that Isadora, like all other personalities in the public eyes, who " wrote," had a " ghost " to do her book for her. But Isadora in this, as in all else in her life, did not do the work in the usual way, nor as people expected she would do it. She stuck to the dictation method which Blasco Ibanez had counselled, except in the first chapters telling of her early days, which she had written out in longhand some time before. In silence and tears she also wrote out the parts telling of the tragic deaths of Patrick and Deirdre. She could not bear to tell of these sorrowful moments to a stranger.

Ordinarily she liked to have many friends about her when she dictated. For the chapters she considered amusing, she always thought the presence of Dougie was necessary. On the days when she felt like tackling these lighter chapters or episodes, she would send her stenographer or accompanist to his studio to rouse him from bed before mid-day, so that he could come to the Studio Hotel for lunch and then stay on to laugh during the afternoon's dictation and share a bottle of " something cheering."

Among the intimates of the dancer, at this period, was the famous French communist,

Charles Rappoport. To her other friends who used to ask her what she could see in the bearded old man, who looked, they said, like nothing so much as a bespectacled gorilla, she would reply : " You must never regard the outward envelope. Rappoport is a great, good soul, and he is intelligence itself. *Il n'y a que deux choses qui comptent dans la vie—la Bonté et l'Intelligence. Mais la Bonté d'abord.*" (There are only two things that count in life—Goodness and Intelligence. But Goodness first.)

Rappoport was witty and without any doubt the most intellectual communist in France, Henri Barbusse excepted. His peculiar form of outward ugliness made him the most caricatured man in France. But to Isadora he was neither communist nor ugly ; he was simply a good friend—one of so few, these latter days—with whom she could talk intelligently, and who could talk intelligently to her. It is recorded by a friend that one evening when Isadora, a little depressed and ill, lay reclining on her couch in the studio, Rappoport came in, and after the usual salutations said : " I've just come from a dinner at the Russian Embassy. I sat next to Madame Rakowsky. I wanted to get her interested in you and your school, but I didn't want to do it brusquely. So I began to quote Renan's *Prière sur l'Acropole*, and it was an easy transition then to you."

He took from one of his pockets, which were always bulging with newspapers and pamphlets, a little, well-fingered Nelson edition of Renan, and sliding from his chair on to his knees before the couch, he began to read in his cavernous voice one of the most perfect pieces of prose in the French language : Renan's *Prayer on the Acropolis*.

" ' Oh, Nobleness ! Oh, Beauty, simple and true ! (*C'est toi, Isadora !*) Goddess whose worship signifies Wisdom and Reason. Thou whose Temple is a lesson of eternal conscience and sincerity, too late do I come to the threshold of thy mysteries : I bear to thy altar a weight of remorse. And endless seeking has it cost me to find thee. . . .' "

The summer of 1927 came, bringing many friends from America, among them Mary Desti, whom Isadora had not seen since 1923 ; Mercedes de Acosta, laughingly named the Archangel by the dancer ; and Edouard Steichen, whose photographs, taken in Greece in 1920, will remain among the most lovely of the art works by which future generations will learn to know something of America's greatest dancer. Irma Duncan also came on from Moscow to visit Isadora and tell her about the tour made by the School through Siberia and revolution-torn China.

Irma had hoped to see the performance which

had been planned for Isadora by Madame Cécile Sartoris, to take place at the Mogador Theatre at the end of June. This was postponed, however, until July eighth, and although Paris is always supposed to have a *saison morte* during this part of the summer, the theatre was packed by a very distinguished audience of French and Americans. Yvette Guilbert sat in a box adjoining that of Eva Le Gallienne. Cécile Sorel and Émilienne D'Alençon both had box parties. John Emerson, Anita Loos, Mary Miles Minter, William A. Bradley, Edith Taylor, and the Countess of Vallambrosa were a few of the well known Americans scattered throughout the audience.

The Pasdeloup Orchestra, conducted by the excellent *maître*, Albert Wolff, opened the matinée with a superb rendering of the Allegretto from César Franck's *Symphony*. This was followed by Isadora's mighty *Redemption*, to the music of Franck's *Morceau Symphonique*. Then came the ageless *Ave Maria* of Schubert, danced in such a way that there were those in the audience who sobbed aloud. (Who will ever forget the ineffable gesture of the maternal arms cradling nothing? The pitiful tenderness and heartbreaking beauty of it?) After the orchestra had played the first movement of the *Unfinished Symphony* of Schubert, Isadora came out again to dance the second with a more tragic profundity than ever before.

Following the entr'acte came the Wagnerian part of the programme, in which Isadora danced the *Tannhauser Overture* and the *Love-death of Isolde*. Between these two sublime manifestations of her art, the orchestra played the *Funeral March of Siegfried*. At the end of her last dance, as the audience cheered, Isadora came forward and called on the men of the Pasdeloup to stand up and share in the ovation with her ; she also called up on the stage their great leader, and stood with him, bowing and smiling on the flower-strewn stage. No speech. No word to her cheering audience. To many of her old friends there was something a little sad in this omission.

The French writer, Henriette Sauret, giving her impressions after the performance, said :

" Poor great Isadora ! After that performance, after the applause and the recalls, I saw her again before the blue curtains, standing between clusters of trembling flowers, making towards the orchestra leader and the musicians the sweet gesture that associated them with her triumph.

" We went to congratulate her in her dressing-room. She lay there, her bare feet coming out from her half-detached dress, her lovely arms holding up her tired head. Her look was heavy, her made-up red mouth was silent, and the red locks of her hair, twisted in curls like those of antique statues, fell on her shoulders like

weighty stalks. She had lain down, without paying much attention, on the light costumes which she had successively worn in the course of the matinée and then thrown pell-mell on the divan. And on that chaos of crumpled veils with rainbow shades she seemed to have fallen, a vanquished goddess. . . .

" I do not know why, at that moment, the heart oppressed in spite of the joy she had just given us, I recalled the picture of Elizabeth of England dying on her royal carpet piled high with cushions, surrounded by courtiers and ladies of honour. . . ."

After the Mogador performance there was a period of waiting for results from the sale of the serial rights of the book, now going the rounds of editors in England and America. Towards the middle of August the first financial fruits came in : three hundred pounds for the English serial rights. Translated into francs, the sum was just enough to pay for the bills that had accumulated at the Studio Hotel. At this point a friend, Alice Spicer, who was about to drive down to her place in Nice, suggested that Isadora and Mary Desti drive down there with her. She was also inviting a young Russian moving picture man who was very anxious to get some " shots " of the dancer.

On August 8th, the party started off, and *en route* the photographer managed to turn a reel

showing Isadora sitting in the back of the car. Thereafter, for personal reasons, the party split, and Isadora and her companion were forced to take another car at Lyons and continue their journey alone, while Alice Spicer and the photographer jogged on in their car.

CHAPTER XL

At Nice, Isadora and her friend were joined by the accompanist. They all lived in an inexpensive hotel, and the warm happy days spent on the sands at Juan-les-Pins followed one another without anything special happening. The eagerly awaited news from America regarding the sale of the serial rights of the memoirs did not come, however, and the few francs of the common fund went quickly on that coast where money is meant to slide easily through careless fingers. The accompanist borrowed some money and returned to Paris to see what could be done there—and so at the beginning of September, the two women were left alone.

On Sunday the eleventh, Isadora, quite unlike herself, sat down and wrote four long letters, surprising her friends with this sudden epistolary ardour. The last letter she addressed to her Russian " spirit-child," as she called her accompanist.

" Sunday, *Sept. 11–27.*

" DARLING,

" Why no letter ? No telegram ? Nothing from you.

" I was very anxious, until Ivan said he had seen you in Paris and you were quite well. I miss you dreadfully—but we are in such a H—— of a fix here. Mary insisted on leaving that nice hotel where we had credit and coming here where we have none, and the result is we have nothing to eat—and no way of getting out unless I can sell the furniture here.[1] So I can't very well wish you here under such deplorable circumstances.

" Did you see Cécile ? We are in the dark as to whether Houssard has made the mortgage or not. Mr. Schneider could not place the book and has gone to Italy. Our only hope is the American Serial—but no word yet.

" If nothing else turns up, I will try to sell everything here and return to Paris. This place seems to be a *Jonah*.

" Do write and tell me what you are doing—and what your plans are. . . . I hope you are not starving as we are.

" Ivan's plans seem vague, and he evidently has no money. I have not seen Alice. . . . She seems to do nothing but run the car like a female Flying Dutchman.

" Are you living in your studio—are you playing beautiful music ? Think of me and play Scriabine. Perhaps you will be nearer to my

[1] In the Studio Theatre.

spirit when the body with all its material nuisance is not there. There are a few inspired moments in Life and the rest is Chipoka[1]

" I kiss you tenderly with all my love.

" ISADORA."

With no money in hand and none in sight, Mary Desti went boldly to see " Lohengrin," who was summering in his villa at St. Jean-Cap-Ferrat. Although he was no longer the millionaire as he had been in other days—the collapse of the Florida land boom had swallowed up an incredible sum in cash and securities—he agreed, for the sake of old times, to finance the great artist he still admired ; and this for such a period as she would require to work out the new programme, which was to include an interpretation of the *Dante Symphony* of Liszt.

Things, it seemed then, were going to brighten up. On Monday the twelfth, Isadora and Desti went gaily to a luncheon party given by Robert Chandler, the American artist, and Miss Clemence Randolph. There was much persiflage and laughter, and at the end of the lunch someone had the idea that the two great Americans at the table ought to be married to each other. Before the day was over the joke had been carried to the

[1] Chipoka : a word used frequently by Essenine signifying rubbish, bosh.

point of sending a cable to the New York papers announcing the engagement !

Another subject of many *plaisanteries* was Isadora's passionate interest in a small Bugatti and its handsome Italian driver. She had seen this little racing car outside "*La Mère Têtue's*" between Juan-les-Pins and Golfe Juan just a few days before. At one of the tables in the dining-room she had also seen a striking-looking young man, who could surely be no other than the proprietor of the car. From that moment the car and its driver became the one subject in her mind. She even went the length of discussing the purchase of the Bugatti with her friend. An arrangement was made with Benoit Falchetto, the young Italian, who also kept a garage, to come on Wednesday night, September 14th, and take the prospective client for a drive and show her how it ran.

On Tuesday the thirteenth, Isadora was invited to dinner at the house of her friend and manager, M. Hottois. They were to discuss possibilities of a winter *tournée* along the Riviera and elsewhere in France. After the dinner M. Hottois and his wife brought their bright-eyed child into the room to be presented to the famous guest. The ingenuous smile of the infant was a weapon to lacerate the old wound in the dancer's

heart. She gave a piteous cry like one hurt to death and rushed from the room. Her friend quickly followed after her, and found her zig-zagging down the silent street, her body convulsed with each heart-shattering sob. . . .

Early next morning, at dawn, Isadora went to her friend's room. Her eyes were swollen and red. She had wept all night. She said : " Mary, I cannot go on like this. For fourteen years I have had this pain in my heart ; I cannot go on. . . . You must find some way for me to end it all. I cannot live in a world where there are beautiful, blue-eyed, golden-haired children. I cannot. I cannot. . . ."

That evening they dined quietly together in a little restaurant near the studio on the Promenade des Anglais. Isadora's thought was for the young Hippolytus who was coming soon with his chariot ; her companion's thought was of something else she could not very well define. Something oppressive was in the air. She gave vent to her thought : " Isadora, I feel something terrible is going to happen. . . . Please don't go out to-night. Please."

" I am going out to-night in that car if it's the last thing I do. You're bourgeoise, Mary. Take a *fine*, you'll feel better."

Leaving the restaurant, they returned to the

studio, and there, while waiting for the Bugatti, Isadora started the gramophone and began to dance to the record that sang out :

" . . . *Bye, bye, Blackbird,*
No one seems to love or understand me—
You should hear the stories they all hand me.
Make my bed ; put out the light,
For I will be with you to-night—
Blackbird, bye, bye. . . ."

A knock on the door. Isadora, who had her red woollen shawl draped about her, seized her heavy painted silk shawl, and winding it twice around her neck danced to the door to welcome Falchetto. As she stood in the doorway ready to go, Mary Desti, looking at her scant attire, said : " You had better put on my cloak to keep you warm, dear."

" No, no. I shall be quite warm in my red shawl, Mary."

Said Falchetto : " My car is not very clean. Perhaps Madame would wear my leather coat ? "

Isadora shook her head. The driver walked down the path toward the automobile. Isadora danced after him. As she was about to step into the seat beside the driver, she turned and waved back to Mary Desti and a friend that stood in the

doorway of the studio and called out to them : " *Adieu, mes amis, je vais à la gloire !* "

As the car started, Isadora was seen to throw the long fringed end of her shawl over her left shoulder. The car darted forward at full speed, and the shawl seemed to trail on the ground beside the wheel. Mary Desti screamed : " *Ton châle, Isadora ! Ramasse ton châle.*"

The car stopped. The watchers thought it was to allow Isadora to pick up the end of her shawl. They walked towards it and saw that Isadora's head had fallen forward. They ran. The driver was out of the car gesticulating, howling in Italian : " I've killed the Madonna ! I've killed the Madonna ! "

The fringes of the silk shawl and part of the shawl itself were tightly wound round the axle of the wire wheel. The head of Isadora had been pulled down with a sudden jerk as the car had sped forward the twenty metres from the studio. Death, on whom Isadora had so often called since April of 1913, had done its work well. With one swift, unprecedented blow he had crushed her larynx, broken her neck, and burst her carotid artery.

The sobbing friends frantically cut and tore the thick silk from about the wheel and hurried the dancer to the St. Roch Hospital. But all life had left the body. The doctors there pronounced the

death instantaneous. The authorities wanted to take the body to the morgue for further examination, but the friends, indignant and sorrowful, bore the body back to the studio on the Promenade des Anglais, where it lay in state.

" Lohengrin " came, and Robert Chandler came, and all the artists and poets and rich friends and poor friends on the Côte d'Azur filed into the silent, candle-lit and beflowered studio. Arrangements were made to have the body entrained for Paris, where it would be cremated and its ashes buried near those of Deirdre and Patrick. All that could be done to smooth things out was done by the stricken " Lohengrin," and on Friday, the sixteenth of September, the casket containing the body was placed in the Paris-bound train accompanied by Raymond Duncan, Mary Desti, and the accompanist. It was covered by the rich purple velvet cape that Isadora had always worn when dancing Chopin's *Funeral March* and Liszt's " *Les Funérailles*."

The funeral train arrived on Saturday afternoon at the Gare de Lyon, where a little group consisting of Elizabeth Duncan, Fernand Divoire, Ch. Dallies, Lisa Duncan, Dougie, Marcel Herrand, and Alfredo Sides awaited it. Out of the flower-strewn goods van came the purple-covered coffin, greeted by the unrestrained tears and sobs of the assembled friends.

From the station it was borne away to the little Auteuil studio of Raymond Duncan, where Isadora's old blue curtains had been hung to cover up the paint-pots and materials and make an atmosphere of beauty fit for her to repose in. All night Saturday and all day Sunday came friends and flowers. It was noticed that out of all the thousands of Americans assembled in Paris for the Legion festivities, there came but three doughboys in uniform, who, leaving their unfinished cigars outside the studio, bent their knees for a moment before the flower-covered coffin.

CHAPTER XLI

At ten-thirty on the morning of September nineteenth, the friends of Isadora gathered together at the Auteuil studio to escort her body to Père Lachaise Crematorium. As they assembled, bringing with them their tribute of autumn flowers, Ralph Lawton played the piano that stood in the adjoining studio. The music of Beethoven and Chopin, filtering through the thin walls and the blue draperies, fell upon the mourners' ears like celestial harmonies.

At eleven o'clock the men of the *pompes funèbres* carried out the coffin and the floral tributes to the waiting hearse. Over the coffin they placed the purple velvet cloak, and over that they arranged the flowers. Raymond Duncan then stepped forward, and taking out a large American flag which he seemed to have concealed somewhere under the folds of his Greek garb, he draped it over the end of the coffin. When the flowers were being rearranged, someone, remembering perhaps that Isadora had died a Russian citizen with a Soviet passport in her handbag, arranged the large sheaf of scarlet gladiolas and pinned its

broad, red ribbon so that all who passed might read the gold-imprinted inscription :

"THE HEART OF RUSSIA WEEPS FOR ISADORA."

The solemn master of ceremonies having seen that all was well, that those having the right were safely in the drab and courtly carriages, gave the signal, and the hearse started off followed immediately by Raymond, Vitya, Dougie ; her brother, her lover, her friend. Behind them walked Ch. Dallies, Fernand Divoire, José Clará, the sculptor, Mercedes de Acosta, Janet Flanner, Alfredo Sides, Marcel Herrand, Thalia Rosales, Albert Wolff, the conductor, Madame Yorska, Lisa Duncan, and a straggling host of other known and unknown friends.

Over the Pont de Grenelle went the procession, passing the reproduction of the pudgy Goddess of Liberty, whose torch, unlike the original, makes no pretence of ever being lighted. Turning there, it passed slowly along the left side of the Seine. Because of the impending parade of the American Legion down the Champs Élysées and the consequent congestion at the centre of the town, even many hours before its actual start, the funeral cortège was forced to keep to the left bank of the Seine until it reached the Pont Royal.

As it passed the Champs de Mars, a few

Legionaries, hurrying on their way across the bridge to the twin-towered Trocadéro, stared funnily at the flower-heaped hearse followed by such a strange crew ; the long-haired, thin-lipped man in a white blanket and sandalled bare-feet ; the others richly dressed and poorly dressed, with none of the usual signs of mourning ; the few disciples of the Raymond Duncan cult, hatless, stockingless, draped in white woollen blankets. Having stared their fill without making out what it was all about they passed on their way over the bridge to the Trocadéro already filled with Legionaries and their brass bands, absurdly dressed as though for Mardi Gras.

In that same hall, more than a quarter of a century before, Isadora had for the first time received the great revelation of what Greek tragedy could be and how splendid were free, noble movements when employed by a genius. There, sitting in the topmost tribune, she had seen Mounet-Sully play *Œdipe Roi*. A decade later she had danced Gluck's *Orphée* in the same hall, and the same Mounet-Sully, more Olympian than ever, had read the choruses for her, and the Sar Peledan had opened the performance with a lecture on the Art of Isadora. In that same Trocadéro, with her pupils, she had danced to Gluck, to Schubert, to Wagner, to Tchaikowsky, to Scriabine, and, in the uplifting of her arms,

had always embraced in love the thousands who sat like children under her spell.

And now as she passed by for the last time, the Temple was filled with soldiers. As Yvette Guilbert had said that morning : " When the soldiers come, you take your departure, tragic and logical as truth ! "

This farewell by the beloved singer to her sister artist appeared in the " *Œuvre* " under the heading :

" To You, Isadora Duncan

" This 19th of September, 1927, Paris, that acclaimed you, acclaims your brothers of America. You, the greatest of Americans, in a few hours are going to vanish away in smoke, burned as offering to Beauty, and the air of Paris will be sweetened by your blaze. When the soldiers come, you take your departure, tragic and logical as truth !

" Feminine image, Unique Goddess come down to the country of the unworthy, *Résurrectrice* of a great dream, of a great art, *Révélatrice* of that which was, of that which is and that which will be, we thank you for having quenched the thirsts of us, the thirsty, the ARTISTES ! Genius of flesh and of blood, human superhuman, may Olympus greet you ! The great dead poets are going to thrill at your entrance ! One day you will return

among the living, recomposed, pure, and consoling as a flower, for the seeds sown by your genius will perhaps germinate and finally place the human rose in the gardens of our life. You living, who would have dared ?

" YVETTE GUILBERT."

So from the shadow of the American Legion and the Trocadéro, along under the sere-leaved plane trees lining the Quai d'Orsay. At the Pont de l'Alma the mourners saw the marble-faced Théâtre des Champs Élysées, whose bas-reliefs by Bourdelle were inspired by the dead dancer. How often she had danced there on its enormous stage, to the accompaniment of an orchestra or of her pianist, the " Archangel." There, too, immediately after the war, mindless of the chauvinism still aflame in France, she danced a whole Wagner programme with the *maître* Philipe Gaubert directing the orchestra of the Conservatoire and Madame Lucienne Breval of the opera singing Brunhilde's music. Thousands of people hungry for the music of the " enemy " composer crowded the theatre to the point of suffocation. In that theatre, also, in a France furious because of the Russian debts repudiated by the new Revolutionary Government, she danced the *Marche Slave* and cried aloud at the end of her performance " *Vive la Russie.*"

So on by the quays of the left bank, past the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, past the Chambre des Députés, past the Hôtel Palais d'Orsay, where she had lived in 1918 with her " Archangel." At the Pont Royal the cortège turned and crossed the river and passed through the Tuileries gardens to the Rue de Rivoli. Down the street came two battalions of the *Chausseurs Alpins* on their way to guard the American Legion procession from interference by Communists and radical sympathisers of Sacco and Vanzetti. As he passed the hearse, the proud be-medalled officer on horseback brought his shining sabre to a salute ; and then turned to call sharply to the other officers in charge of the command : " Attention ! Eyes left ! " All the officers on foot saluted briskly with their upturned sabres ; the soldiers turned their eyes left as they marched past in cadence ; the standard bearers dipped their tricolours and regimental flags as they went by, all unknowing that the corpse being saluted was once as passionate a sympathiser for Sacco and Vanzetti as any likely to trouble the farcical Mardi Gras parade.

Through the crowded and populous section of the Rue de Rivoli went the slow procession. The women with shawls on their heads and the working men there knew who lay in the coffin. " *Pauvre* Isadora ! " they said quietly, remembering the tragedy of her life and the other cortège that

followed two little white coffins fourteen years before. " *Pauvre* Isadora ! " Down there lies the Châtelet Theatre where you triumphed so often with Edouard Colonne conducting his great orchestra for you. Up there on the Boulevard de Strasbourg is the Gaîté Lyrique, where you and your school of happy little German girls charmed the public with *Orphée* and *Iphigénie* and joyous waltzes of Brahms and Schubert.

So through the Place de la Bastille, down the Rue Roquette, and past the grim and uncivilised prison of unhappy and miserable youth, on to the principal gateway of the cemetery of Père Lachaise. A drizzling rain had begun, but it had not driven away these thousands of people who stood by the gates waiting to escort the funeral procession up the long winding road to the Crematorium. The place before the Chapel was black with over ten thousand human beings of all ranks and stations, and only a few could find places in the interior.

When the coffin had been taken from the hearse and pushed into the box from where the officials took it to the furnace, the music began. Ralph Lawton, who had sometimes accompanied Isadora in Paris and Brussels, played *Les Funérailles* of Liszt. The Calvet Quartette then played a Beethoven Andante, following which M. Garcia Marsellac sang Schubert's *Ave Maria*. As the

Quartette was about to play again, the mourners were astonished to see the brother of the dead dancer arise from his seat in the front row and, marching down the aisle with his woollen toga flying behind him, go towards the great doors as though impelled by some irresistible force. The guardian opened the portals and soon, above the murmurs of the assembled thousands outside, came the assured and emotionless voice of someone shouting in French : " We started out from San Francisco many years ago. We were four and now we are three. . . ."

Inside the chapel, Isadora's friend, Mary Desti, said between her sobs : " They were *ONE* and now they are *NONE* ! " The calm voice outside rose and fell on the sharp autumnal air as though addressing a political overflow meeting, and when the speaker had finished his harangue, he returned to his seat followed by the gaze of the wondering mourners in the chapel. The quartette then played the *Aria for the G String* of Bach. This piece, so charged with its own heart-breaking beauty and with the memories which the intimate friends of Isadora knew so well were attached to it, swept over them and broke down any resistance they might have had in showing the world their grief. There were those there who sobbed like little children—hard, body-racking sobs that could not be stayed.

DRAWING OF ISADORA DUNCAN MADE SPECIALLY FOR IRMA DUNCAN BY THE SPANISH SCULPTOR JOSÉ CLARÁ, PARIS, 1927.

Following the Aria, the poet Fernand Divoire ascended the pulpit, and, with a voice that seemed to be held steady only by a supreme effort of will, he read his tribute—his funeral oration for the adored goddess about whose divine body the flames were now curling. When the music of his voice, almost sobbing out the last word of his tribute, had passed over the still audience, the voice of the baritone was heard again singing Eleonora Duse's favourite song ; the song she had sometimes sung for Isadora at Viareggio : Beethoven's *In Questa Tomba Oscura* :

" *In this dark tomb*
Let me be at rest.
When I was living,
Then, it was, you should have thought of me,
Oh, ungrateful one ! "

Ralph Lawton then played a Chopin Nocturne on the piano, and the family were called behind the curtain to see the ashes placed and sealed into the little casket. They covered it with the purple mantle, and it was then borne by the men of the *pompes funèbres* to the place in the wall of the Columbarium where it would finally be sealed up. The family and the orderless group of friends followed it to the place near which there were other sacred ashes in other little boxes, sealed up

with marble slabs that bore the simple words : " Deirdre," " Patrick."

" Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney sweepers, come to dust."

One by one, the friends passed by the absurd little cubby-hole in the wall of the Columbarium, and then took their leave of the Duncan family. . . .

Who would have thought that a year later, a little year, out of these crowding thousands of admirers, friends and family, only two remembered ? Only two friends came with tear-wet red roses to stand by the urn and murmur : " Isadora ! Isadora ! "

. . . . . .

FUNERAL ORATION FOR ISADORA BY FERNAND DIVOIRE

" One of her friends, who was at times a faint-hearted friend, stands here in all humility to speak with the voice of her friends. To-day there is not one of her friends, not one of her relations, who does not feel in his heart some humility : humility of men of good-will before genius ; humility of poor souls before a soul generous with all richness ; humility that makes us tell what dew fell on us from this genius, and how, out of hard,

shrivelled, crabbéd seeds she tried to bring forth little flowers athirst for light—athirst for her light.

" My voice at this moment is trying to cover another sound, the only sound that stays in your mind as I speak—the voice of the fire. And fire is the last vibration, the last music, which, while we sit here, the body that was Isadora, obeys.

" That body, in the service of a soul, was Beauty. This fire, what is it if not the abyss that saves from the horrors of obscurity, the horrors of the struggle with the earth ? There are some, of whom, perhaps, we are not, who prefer, enflamed, the abyss surrounded by a golden glory to the soiled mediocrity of grey and black tears.

" Isadora is here. Isadora has ended the labour of her mission. Her mission was one of defiance. And the defiance was always of such an elevation, of such a violence, that never for a moment was Destiny unaware of it.

" Not any more than Destiny was unaware of the mission of Prometheus.

" And endlessly Destiny struck at her with the implacability of a human judge. Now Destiny, with a brutality that was perhaps pity, has at length set down the final period, the OMEGA of all human careers, to its vengeances. It strangled her just after she danced once more.

" I am not great enough to know if, on the fourteenth of September, 1927, Destiny honoured itself, as we say.

" What did Isadora want that so irritated the Gods ? And when I say the Gods, each one of you, down in your heart's core will understand a different thing, which is the truth.

" She wanted Joy. She wanted Beauty. She wanted Joy and Beauty, because she was Joy and Beauty.

" Before Death—before that Death who pretends to be the ultimate reality and whom we would fain ignore, whom we would overstep—what signify Joy and Beauty ? Joy and Beauty signify that which passes over Death.

" For fourteen years, since the day that already brought us to this place, and of which no image has ever faded from before our mind's eye, Isadora, as soon as she could lift up a shattered body and heart and soul, Isadora danced the great dance of regeneration—Suffering—Struggle —Triumph.

" Where now is the Triumph ? We ask one another, and from one another we beg a reply. And only in our own hope, in our own faith, do we find the reply.

" To-day the great harp tuned to the dance of the world, the great harp tuned to the voices that knew how to repeat the sublimest echoes

our kind has ever heard—the great voice is broken in a cry like a harp thrown to the flames.

" Where is the Triumph ? Isadora wanted to nourish human beings on the joy of being alive ; she wanted them to know how to draw into their very depths the glow of life. And we—and each one of us—we drew in that glow and were before her as scholar-children. We disdained that which she disdained : matter, vanity, spitefulness, and mourning.

" And mourning.

" For her, for the tenacious tragedy that was her life, it would be a pitiful choir were there but the nameless voice you are now listening to.

" But think, at this very moment, on two continents there are thousands, and, I think, hundreds of thousands of voices repeating a single word : ' Isadora.'

" The word that in hours of fervour, at the hours when there opened before us the heavy, hostile portals that shut Joy away from us, we repeated with such tearful gratitude : ' ISADORA.'

" She disdained mourning ?

" No one here, no one, whoever you are or whatsoever you have suffered, no one ever knew as she did what mourning was, or what empty arms were that cradled nothing.

" And yet she disdained mourning.

" I ask you now to listen to me, for she is about to speak.

" Listen. It is a letter.

" A young man, since dead, between these two dates, 14–18, had gone to listen to her, so that he might repeat her words in one of these sheets that last but a day. And afterwards, Isadora wrote to him :

" ' You found me the other day in a moment of great weakness.

" ' But when I read the impression I had made on you I was frightened at the thought that my words perhaps would sow discouragement in a world where there is so much need, on the contrary, of Courage and Hope.

" ' In a moment of clear-sightedness and strength, we understand that even the worst Afflictions, Catastrophes, Horrors, are but a veil of mystery hiding other truths.

" ' I, who by my work have always tried to preach that Joy is stronger than Sorrow ; that Death is but a door that leads us to the Eternal Harmony of the Universe ; that the fearsome appearances of physical suffering and matter are merely an illusion that the initiated know how to interpret (forgive me, I cannot express myself in words, but I have often danced my Credo, and the triumphant proof was given by Beethoven in the great Hymn to Joy at the end of the *Ninth*

Symphony), I will never forgive myself if, because of my words, repeated by you, a few souls, as sorrowful as I am, have been discouraged.

" ' I am going at once to start work, forward, always with the voices of the unseen Angels, with Beauty, the divine Music, towards the Joy and the Light that are our final goal.'

" Ah, it is not I who spoke of the voices of unseen Angels—— It is she. Of these voices I once spoke, and she made a sign with her hand, but *she it was who heard them*, she it was who, in her nights, heard them, even as she saw the shining lights.

" And if her speech, before the people she met, did not always contain the word ' Angels ' it is perhaps because she was absolved from all words as she was beyond them, because she was absolved from any other speech but that of genius ; from any other prayer but genius.

" So with the voices of the unseen Angels, with the divine Music, towards the Joy and the Light.

" Weep not, Lisbeth, her sister : Weep not, Raymond, her brother, whom she called so maternally, with so much sweet tenderness, ' My little brother Raymond.' My voice is not that of a playboy trying to draw tears.

" ' Towards the Joy and the Light,' do you hear ?

" So, we must forget and remember. We must

remember the Joy and the Light. We must remember her who was Joy and Light.

" Only yesterday, in your studio, close to her, with the blue curtains before which she had been all her life Beauty and Light, I heard a hymn sweet with an infinite peace. With an unhoped-for peace.

" Those who defy the laws of Time, those who wish for Joy when it is still weeping time, even those have the right, finally—*the price paid*—to some recompense.

" From the depth of the abyss Isadora believed in Triumph, she believed in Joy.

" In the depth of the abyss, to-day, we cling one to the other, and, refusing to despair, with one voice, in my poor, humble, and faint-hearted voice, we send out, over all, a single word. Out of the depth, beyond despair, towards that which, by the grace of a woman's genius will become to-morrow, right sure we are, a single word :

" ISADORA "

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